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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

APRIL 17 1981

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Looking for the middle way

By J.R. Vincent

SHIRLEY WILLIAMS:
Politics Is for People
216pp. Allen Lane. £8.50 (Penguin)
paperback £2.50.
0 7139 1423 8

MATTHEW OAKESHOTT:
The Road from Limestone to Westminster
Prospects for a Radical Re-alignment at the General Election
25pp. Radical Centre for Democratic Studies, 46 Bath Road, London W4, £5.

MICHAEL STEAD AND DAVID FAULK:
'First Past the Post'
The Great British Class Handicap
Opp. Liberal Action Group for Electoral Reform, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1, 15p.

Shirley Williams's book, her first, is about "the crisis of industrialism facing Britain today" which calls for "a quantum jump... a leap to a new approach", the present life going deeper than "the world economy pulling a muscle" or the exhaustion of the conventional thinking of the post-war years... based on constant economic growth. It is not about party politics. It could have been written by any aspiring Conservative, Liberal or Labour politician. The idea of a Social Democrat party does not appear. How unlike a conventional politician! When she should be guiding her opponents into the dust, she produces a far-sighted tract on the future of the Third World, the merits of the West German apprenticeship system, and the effects of the microchip. But so it is.

Social democracy appears, fleetingly, as a passing thought, Robert Owen, Tawney ("marvellously far-sighted"). "Owen and Tawney are to political thought what Vaughan Williams was to music: pastoral, gentle, and humane... Tawney's High Anglicanism, as usual, is hidden; indeed "his socialism owes a great deal to the nonconformist tradition of brotherhood". Politics is treated throughout in purely secular language. Mrs Williams is a Christian and a politician, but not, in this book, a Christian politician. Rather the reverse: the exclusion of religion is almost pointed. Abortion and other "Home Office" issues do not figure, and the "enrichment of the quality of human life" for which she calls is a replacement for economic growth "is simply a matter of institutional change."

If Mrs Williams is the heiress to anyone, it is not to Tawney, but to the economic paternalism of the Macmillan era. It is not easy for her to look ahead, when she is so rooted in a past where ministers were judged by their ability to draw up spending programmes. The future she would like to have is really the early 1960s with large. She looks back to that period as a golden age. She looks back to the age of the Antonines. It was a lost Keynesian heyday, when deficit finance was virtuously counter-cyclical, and small inflation did not lead to large inflation. It must not be forgotten that Mrs Williams first entered both Parliament and office in 1964, and a faint scent of National Plans and Brown Papers still clings to her.

Politics Is for People is very much the sort of book that has always been written at the bottom of trade cycles in the belief that nothing will ever be the same again. A reader ignorant enough to benefit from a rather rapid tour of her rather small governmental horizon may perhaps learn here what everyone else has learnt elsewhere. Mrs Williams's mistakes are of politics and economics are no better and no worse than other people's mistakes, though distinctly more lucid and readable than those of her colleague Dr Owen. Indeed, they are not really mistakes. If you set too high a standard for a writer on the present life, none of them would set off on the road that leads through E. F. Schumacher, Barbara Ward, Even Luard and Fred Hirsch to the proposition that "small is beautiful", making a statutory but perhaps rather contradictory detour in the direction of the grandiose conceptions of the Brandt report. Mrs Williams offers from the other nine only these proposals: "I simply to state the obvious: the 'middle way' is the only way to a better society." She does not explore the really important question: why some states (OEC, Scandinavia) are

good and others bad.

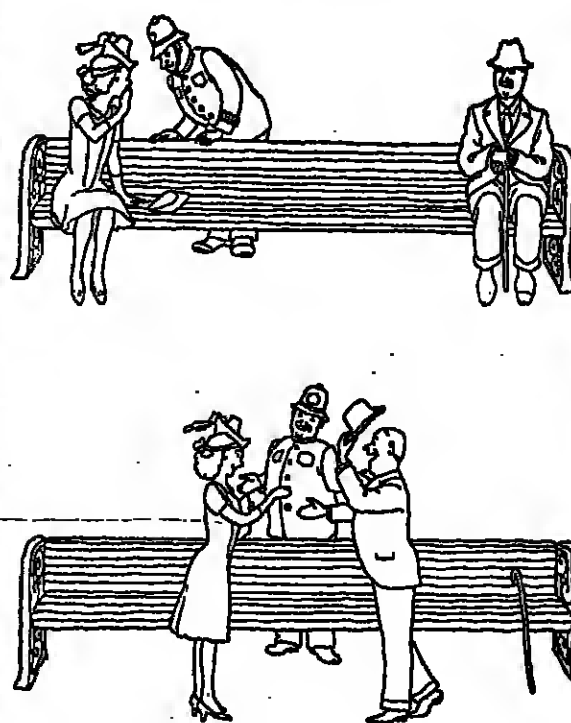
She has seen the microelectronic future and it works (except for the girls in the typing pool, who will lose their jobs). Work will increasingly be done at home. Microchips will "reunite the family", and, whole again, as the economic system becomes subject to "the requirements of the whole human being". Apple-checked women will sit at cottage doors, children playing at their feet, while optic fibres enable them to follow stock prices or microprocessors give them their daily dose of continuing education. We have here a pretty mix of Wilson's white heat of the technological revolution, English socialist nostalgia about the future, English upper-class "back to the land" notions, and a dogmatic disbelief in the eternal violence of sin and/or class conflict. The microchip becomes the symbol of the traditional English fads.

the question of what to do with 16-19-year-olds, are creating a new consensus about the main objectives in education. She recognizes, as few politicians and fewer economists seem to do, that the general state of the economy is not a very good key to the workings of the labour market. (For instance, much of the present strain arises from an increase between 1976 and 1982 of 1,100,000 in those seeking work. Unusually low-interest rates have coincided with the arrival of the Macmillan baby boom on the labour market.)

Mrs Williams sees the unions, the welfare state, and the politicians as each in their different ways devouring the young; the unions by making the wage costs of employing non-adult or less skilled labour uneconomic, the welfare state by raising the non-wage costs of employment to menacing levels, and the politi-

cians by doing an easy wrong, but one would like to see more evidence that she is capable of a difficult right in the central areas of policy.

She very rarely attempts to tackle questions unless they can be answered benevolently and within the moral terminology of the prosperous intelligentsia. (The exception is her contempt for unilateral British nuclear disarmament.) At times her power to "moralize" her material approaches genius. She is the only politician to have seen the need to popularize the EEC as a vehicle of social justice, an embodiment of moral concern, a sort of Liberal party of the world. She can carry student audiences with her on this theme till one can hear a pin drop. She can even square the circle by coming out firmly against the CAP, yet bemoaning "there is a good egalitarian argument for maintaining the incomes of small farmers". (There had better be.) Mrs Wil-



These Heath Robinson cartoons, which depict one member of the London Constabulary "introducing two strangers in the park", and another "striking out in sartorial splendour in 'new evening uniform for police duties in the West End'", are taken from *How to Build a New World* (136pp. £5.95/7.50/\$13.43) which will be published later this month by Duckworth with *How to Make the Best of Things* (120pp. £5.95/7.50/\$13.43). Cecil Hunt collaborated with Heath Robinson on the texts of both these books.



"Practical politics", she writes, "is about ruling classes, bureaucrats, parties, lobbies, interests, and advancement." Well, yes, it is, and her case is no exception. She represents a permanent tension between the state intelligentsia, the quality press, and privileged youth, on the one hand, and "the deep conservatism of governments, firms, and unions" on the other. The tension behind her consists of those who have ideas but little power, property, or seniority, and she represents it well. She faces those who have power, property and seniority, but few ideas. It is force against force, for the power to define a national agenda or create a mood, which she embodies, is as great as the power to frustrate it. We, like the French, have our *grandes écoles* of public life. One is the political world of Oxford. The other is the higher journalism, especially financial journalism. Both stand for reason and movement against the untidy sprawl and torpor of reality. With the advent of the Social Democrats, this central tension of post-war history has risen to the surface in clearer form than before.

What then are the prospects for the new party? This is a matter on which predictions have varied wildly. At first it was seen, essentially as a Labour split, a reason for Mrs Thatcher sleeping soundly in her bed. Supported though this was by the quite unprecedented lack of positive public support for Mr Foot, it was denied by the failure of the break-away group to take with it the Campaign for Labour Victory, their base within mainstream Labour. Indeed, the short-term impact of the SD secession has been to strengthen the parliamentary Right within the Labour party. Meanwhile Conservative MPs did their sum, and did not like what they saw. A Liberal revival, hitherto puzzlingly absent during this parliament, was beginning to flood in space under an inaccustomed name. By-elections were ruthlessly suppressed. The Liberals in turn had cause to worry when it became clear that under "prompted" questioning, their vote was far from secure. From Social Democrat attack. By the time of launching, the new group had failed dismally to do what it had hoped (in winning support from Labour's parliamentary Broad Right, from any "moderate" union, from the well-funded Co-op, from European Social Democracy, or from the surprisingly hostile press). Yet it had progressed from being a Labour Party split to being an incalculable change in the structure of parties. Commentators recognized this. Peregine Worsfold hailed it as a Suburban Liberation Movement suited to a suburban country: Ivor Crewe, the Essex opinion analyst, predicted that the next election would be about the place of the Social Democrats in the party system. All this in three months—during which unprompted support for, even recognition of, the existence of the SDs on their own, remained painfully low. It is the public, and the "prompted" polls, which have created a still non-existent Liberal/SD alliance, whose electoral potential in the absence of by-elections, can only be examined in the light of some mildly surprising psychological considerations.

In *First Past the Post*, an academic study by two Liberal psephologists, a careful reworking of figures shows how the Liberals suffer, much not just from being a third party, but from being a third party which is also a non-class party. The most startling result is that (assuming the SDs did not exist) when the three parties all have 33 per cent of the vote, the outcome in English seats would be Labour 253, Conservative 207, and Liberal 56. Even if the Liberal vote

John P. Mackintosh

rose to 37.5 per cent and the Labour vote fell to 30.75 per cent. Labour would remain by far the largest party in Parliament. The dramatic change would come if the Liberal vote rose by a mere further 2½ per cent. The result would then be Liberals 249, Conservative 50, Labour 217. These calculations, which are based on Labour and Conservative voters defecting in equal numbers, show Labour's almost complete immunity to Liberal onslaught. For instance, if the Liberal vote increased from 15 per cent to 35 per cent, Labour seats would fall only from 255 to 251. The problem for the Liberals is to reach the level about 35 per cent of the national vote, when they begin to destroy the Conservative party in Conservative-held areas, and this is what Social Democracy will achieve if it achieves anything.

The outlook for the Liberals or the Social Democrats by themselves looks profoundly unpromising, because of the way the electoral system works. The Social Democrats therefore need to persuade that an alliance of the two could beat the system. In *The Road from Labour* to Westminster their house psychopologist, Matthew Oakshott, a former Special Adviser to Roy Jenkins, has accordingly tried to show that an alliance might gain more than the 25,000 letters of support, two years, and a party obituary by David Marquand which is all that the sceptical allow it. History lends some support to such scepticism, for the Liberals were in the lead in the polls not long before the 1964 election, in which they won only nine seats. However, some conjectures about future patterns, if not magnitudes, can be made, provided one does not guess at majorities which doubles any inaccuracy.

The best way to think of the electoral system is to consider it as two quite different countries, Labourland and Toryland, which happen to have elections on the same day. Labourland consists of the 269 British seats won in 1979, a year when Labour fell back on its hard core of industrial support. Labour seats tend to have large majorities, and Labour voters an instinctive closeness to their party, at least when it is in opposition. The remarkable feature of Labourland is that the Liberals virtually do not exist there.

There is no Liberal base on which the Social Democrats can build. In 1979, there were only two out of 269 British seats where Liberals ran second. Conceptually, the Liberals may be an alternative to Labour; geographically, they are not, and ours is a geographical system. Even if at the next election a new party were to replace the Conservatives in second position in many Labour strongholds, this would be only a tiny footnote in history, not a reshaping of politics.

The Social Democrats, operating as they must mainly in Labourland, will have no base of Liberal organization on which to build. The Liberals, nationally, will not want to give up any promising prospects, and, locally, they will simply refuse to stand down. The SDs in Labour areas will probably operate mainly to divide the Conservative vote. Labour voters will stay where they are, for good reasons. Unlike the thinking classes, who prefer Labour governments to Labour oppositions, Labour voters in working-class seats will feel no strain on their loyalty now Labour is out of office. Moreover, the SDs now look as Labour as they ever will, but as time passes and they try to build up a non-specific body of support, they will look increasingly non-Labour to the man in the Wigan street. The next election will not be about Labourland at all.

In Toryland, the position since the 1920s has been one of divide and rule. Tory hegemony has never been based on having more than 50 per cent of the vote in their constituencies. The Tories need flourishing Liberal and Labour parties which cancel each other out. The Labour Party in southern England is a fact of profound importance in areas where it has never won a seat. The Social Democrats threaten this happy state of affairs. The new alliance may augment a solid existing Liberal vote with Social Democratic trickles from three sources: ex-Tories, ex-Labour, and perhaps very important, ex-abstainers. The proportion of people switching to the SDs from each of these camps can be quite small and yet destroy the Tories.

Oakshott candidly admits that if the new alliance got between 20-30 per cent

of the national vote, then the Liberals would be the chief beneficiary from the alliance. Liberals will win Tory seats on a slight rise in the tide, long before SDs win anything from anybody. The Liberals should find it easy to use the SDs; the latter will find it hard to get anything from the Liberals in return. The Liberals will retain almost everything that looks winnable; the SDs have not a single promising constituency. It remains pure speculation whether local Liberals will vote SD if told to. The alliance makes obvious sense to everyone but those engaged in the nuptials.

Though the Liberals have most to gain, they are making the most loss. The Young Liberals repine, there are murmurs among the Association of Liberal Councilors, there is even a Thorpe underfoot at work. Liberal MPs have mixed views. The difficulties facing Mr Steel are far greater than those outside the party imagine. A Union of Hearts will not come about because public opinion thinks it should. The public may see Mr Williams in the shop window, and rejoice; the Liberal politician sees Dr Owen running the shop, and sighs for more sugar on the pill. The prizes may glitter, but two most recent polls, an alliance with 46 per cent of the vote could win 470 seats, but the people whom Mr Steel has to convince did not, by definition, enter politics because they find glittering prizes a conclusive argument.

Oakshott's electoral analysis is perhaps chiefly interesting for what it plays down. This, once again, is the asymmetry of impact of a new alliance on the party system. If the new group won three times as many voters from Labour as from Conservatives (a remarkable assumption), the seats gained would be still very largely Conservative ones. The SDs in their running-in period must necessarily be marketed as an alternative Labour party, but this they cannot be, unless there is an infinitely greater split than has been seen so far. The SDs are either Mr Foot's best friends, or at a lower level a model technique for promoting a Liberal revival of a predictable kind. If Labour collapses, it will not be because of SD inroads; if Labour returns to power, the reason may well be the impact of the SDs on the Liberal vote in Tory areas.

Spending toward equality

By Evan Luard

C. A. R. CROSLAND:
The Future of Socialism
368pp. Cape. £8.95.
0 224 01888 4

DAVID LIPSEY and DICK LEONARD (editors):
The Socialist Agenda
Crosland's Legacy
242pp. Cape. £7.95.
0 224 01886 8

Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* is rightly regarded as a landmark in the intellectual history of the Labour Party. In the aftermath of the defeat of the Attlee government in 1951 the party was almost as uncertain and divided as to where it should go as it is, after a similar defeat, today.

Crosland's book, published in 1956, presented the most articulate, sophisticated and closely reasoned statement of the "revisionist" position: that the party should rethink its objectives, that it should cease regarding the large-scale extension of public ownership as the chief goal of policy, and that it should instead concentrate on learning how to run a successful, high-growth, mixed economy that would provide better welfare services and a high standard of living for all.

Crosland's main thesis, that nationalization should no longer be seen as the principal objective of a modern socialist party, was not particularly new and would have been accepted by a substantial section of the party even at that time (and was certainly accepted by his friend, Hugh Gaitskell, recently elected as its leader).

But his view of the problems was much wider than this. And because he was a highly intelligent and thoughtful person and a skilful writer, his book represented the most serious and comprehensive analysis yet attempted of the sort of policies which a socialist government should seek to follow in running a modern mixed economy.

It is thus valuable that the book is now reissued, together with a mammoth volume of essays by a number of friends and admirers who examine the political heritage which Crosland has left behind.

How relevant is his analysis today? The most specific elements in his thought (apart from the negative rejection of a massive increase in public ownership) were probably three.

First was his deeply felt commitment to the goal of equality—socialism, as he put it, "about equality"; second, his demand for a very high level of public spending as a means of achieving this (through larger social service programmes); and third, his strong belief in the need for a high rate of growth which alone could make possible large public spending and increased welfare generally.

At first sight none of these goals is in any way contentious, at least for socialists. Among the few things that most members of the Labour Party today would find they could agree on is the need for greater equality, high public spending and more rapid growth. There would be widespread agreement that past Labour governments did not do enough, and that future Labour governments should do more, to achieve all three. To that extent, it could be said, Crosland's ideas have become part of the conventional wisdom (though, to be fair, they had been accepted by very many long before he wrote).

It is thus his prescriptions concerning the means of achieving these goals which are perhaps most important, and it is here that his analysis today sometimes seems inadequate. Take growth, for example. Given the great importance that he rightly attached to high growth, it is surprising that he did not analyze in greater depth the difficulty of achieving it; a difficulty he clearly underestimated (as he ruefully recognized in the preface to the second edition of his book). The main constraints which have prevented Labour governments (and indeed others) from "obtaining growth" in Britain have been two: balance of payments difficulties and inflation.

Nowhere in *The Future of Socialism*, or in any of his later writings, did he systematically analyse the problem which successive British governments have encountered (and which may be encountered again in a year or two, despite the benefits of North Sea oil): the effect of high growth in sucking in imports and creating a balance of payments crisis. He may have assumed that this difficulty could be overcome by the adoption of an appropriate exchange rate (though David Lipse in *The Socialist*

Agenda quotes surprising evidence that in 1965 he favoured resort to a short-sighted protectionism). Critically any exponent of high growth today must provide answers to this perennial problem; and it is a 66 appointment that neither of these volumes addresses themselves at any length to it. Similarly Crosland's writings provide little guidance about the best way of defusing the other enemy of high growth, inflation. In *The Future of Socialism* he does recognize briefly that this could be a constraint on growth. But apart from calling for higher savings, he does not suggest a solution. And he devoted little attention (even in his later writings) to the ways in which many today believe in the only means of meeting the problem without incurring the costs of severe deflation (such as Crosland above all would have deplored): incomes policy.

We are also perhaps today more aware of the problems that surround his other major goal, increased public spending. Its limits set by the public's willingness to support high levels of taxation; the problem of funding and controlling the flows so that it finishes up in the most socially valuable channels (rather than those now deeply hollowed out in the past); and the difficulty of limiting the growth of centralized power and bureaucratic authority which must normally accompany increased spending programmes. These are all problems about which political discussion today is increasingly concerned, none of which are much explored by Crosland.

The Socialist Agenda recognizes, and seeks to fill, some of these gaps. No less than four of the chapters are related to the theme of incomes policy. William McCarthy stresses the importance of such a policy, above all as a means of restraining the claims which wages and salaries would otherwise make on the national income, and so allowing the type of expansionary policy Crosland himself, J. B. McLeode sets out a detailed proposal for a new type of incomes policy which would use demand for labour as the primary criterion and make use of a system of arbitration to settle disputed cases. Gaitskell, while defending the close link between the Labour Party and its unions, suggests that, as a condition for maintaining that alliance, the unions should be expected to commit themselves to the aim of a long-term income policy. Little examines the effect of constraints within the international economy on the domestic policies of a Labour government, especially the inflationary pressures which it too feels make wages policy essential. The views do not coincide: thus while McCarthy and Gaitskell both suggest that import controls may be the necessary price for winning wage curbing, Little strongly condemns any attempt of this kind to throw the cost of export subsidies on to workers abroad, mainly living in countries infinitely poorer than we are.

There is also some examination of another special concern of Crosland's: the expansion of the public sector. In one of the best public expenditure, in one of the best chapters in the book, Colin Cunniff, Neil Bell, Kurt Vonnegut and Graham Greene, but these give very summary discussions, and some of them none. The only point he makes in listing them is about the unpopularity of public expenditure. It is as if, being by "good" writers, they do not count. Similarly, when remarking that in Britain states (reflected in the myth that the state has been high) and he rightly suggests that the expansion of the public sector in the future should be based more closely on the local community and should make more use of available voluntary efforts than have the bureaucratic social services mainly developed in the past.

Crosland cannot therefore escape the difficulty that affects all but the very greatest political writers: with changing conditions the relevance of their analyses begins to fade. But the underlying problems which his analysis raised—what degree of public control of industry is necessary at the present time, and how should it be exercised, what level and what type of public expenditure should future Labour governments aim at, what means can a more equal society in Britain best be established—these continue to be the most central questions facing Socialists (and indeed others) at the present time. If Crosland's answers, no longer seem altogether satisfactory, they do much to help us to think more clearly about those vital issues.

JOHN SUTHERLAND:
Bestsellers: Popular Fiction of the 1970s
266pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £8.95.
0 7100 0750 7

Bestsellerdom, writes John Sutherland in his study of popular fiction in the 1970s, "brings all sorts of formative and deforming pressures to bear on the best novels and novellas of our age." This so-called pressure is a very different formulation from "Lawrence's later novels". But this one has been mounting for a century. He quotes Henry James deploring the stuff he saw for sale "in the glare of railway bookstalls" in 1899, the thriving manifestation of something that made nonsense of Arnold's definition of culture as "the best that has been thought or said". In fact, since culture defined as "improvement or refinement by education and training", and the condition of being thus trained and refined, comes only fourth and fifth in the list of meanings in the Shorter OED, it seems to me that one need not be amazed if the second of the OED definitions of culture—"the artificial definition of microsocial arguments"—should sometimes seem more relevant.

Mr Sutherland points to the gulf between W. H. Smith's "Top Ten Paperbacks" and "the 55 apocryphal novels earnestly evaluated in this week's *New Statesman*, *Spectator* and *TLS*". (In the months between writing and publishing his book, the world has moved on: the cost of earnestly evaluated novels this week is likely to be £6.95.) Critics, he says, have no professional tools for assessing bestsellers; the bestseller even does away with the essential concepts of text and authorship, since it is often a team effort between agent or ideas-man, author, editor and publicity department. The critics don't matter, damn to the books that sell and; to the serious bookman, "the business which is not respected is that of selling".

That literary persons have almost invariably been hostile to bestsellerdom, seeing it as a cultural debasement, and the term "bestseller" to Queneau Leavis, or Per Gärden, or Richard Hoggart—has had pejorative overtones. Dr Sutherland has also looked at purely quantitative analyses and definitions, such as F. L. Mot's, for whom a bestseller is a book that sells "a quantity equal to 1 per cent of the population of the US for the decade in which it was published." Studies of this kind are necessarily neutral, and contain no literary criticism. Mr Sutherland declares that he also is neutral, and the blurb of his book states that he covers the "neglected area" of literary criticism as well.

He has written on interesting books; but neither of these two claims are justified. He is not neutral at all. He remarks that superstars of the 1970s include novels by Goldsmith, John Updike, Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, Kurt Vonnegut and Graham Greene, but these give very summary discussions, and some of them none. The only point he makes in listing them is about the unpopularity of public expenditure. It is as if, being by "good" writers, they do not count. Similarly, when remarking that in Britain states (reflected in the myth that the state has been high) and he rightly suggests that the expansion of the public sector in the future should be based more closely on the local community and should make more use of available voluntary efforts than have the bureaucratic social services mainly developed in the past.

Mr Sutherland's lack of neutrality is further demonstrated by his attitude to what he calls, in seemingly scornful quotation marks, "research". He is interesting about the high level of technical information in American bestsellers—in those written after the Watergate disclosures by Nixon's "chambers", for example, "full disclosure of the truth" as he puts it. He is also interesting about the precision and accuracy of an insider about the workings of the book industry, and the way in which the book industry has succeeded so outstandingly in the field of background material, and he shows considerable hostility to "all this information-gathering, grandly called 'research', and the 'bestsellers' and 'bestsellers' that follow it". He is also interesting about the way in which the book industry has succeeded so outstandingly in the field of background material, and he shows considerable hostility to "all this information-gathering, grandly called 'research', and the 'bestsellers' and 'bestsellers' that follow it".

Mirrors by the million

By Victoria Glendinning

The onus here is hard to understand. Research is surely research, whether in philology or the workings of General Motors. Has a bestselling author no business to be so assiduous?

Mr Sutherland also sees bestsellers as tailored in the market of the day and to their short shelf-life: that there is no progression to be traced in the work of any one author; for example, as he says, "the latest Harold Robbins" is a very different formulation from "Lawrence's later novels". But this one has been mounting for a century. He quotes Henry James deploring the stuff he saw for sale "in the glare of railway bookstalls" in 1899, the thriving manifestation of something that made nonsense of Arnold's definition of culture as "the best that has been thought or said". In fact, since culture defined as "improvement or refinement by education and training", and the condition of being thus trained and refined, comes only fourth and fifth in the list of meanings in the Shorter OED, it seems to me that one need not be amazed if the second of the OED definitions of culture—"the artificial definition of microsocial arguments"—should sometimes seem more relevant.

Nor is there very much of the promised literary criticism. There are plot summaries, generalizations, and descriptions of methods and themes. Mr Sutherland has quite reasonably chosen to approach bestsellers "by an examination of the apparatus which produces them"—bestseller lists, the publishing industry, publicity bluffs (ie, "the artificial development of microsocial arguments"). The material is overwhelmingly American, since bestselling in Britain is still in its jaundiced infancy. The first bestseller lists appeared in the *American Bookman* in 1895 and have proliferated and become elaborated and computerized since. There were none in Britain until *The Sunday Times* in 1970, which aroused much controversy. The battle isn't over yet. Michael Holroyd was writing in the *Observer* on March 29, "We need to abolish those fairly meaningless bestseller lists".

But to the United States they are apparently not meaningless, and "to sell" is a very active verb indeed. Bestsellers bypass the benign but passive bookseller who, in this country at least, has traditionally been a stockist rather than a salesman. The books go straight into supermarkets and on to news stands. Mr Sutherland quotes some startlingly aggressive remarks from Americans in the business: "There's no such thing as a good book that doesn't sell" (Michael Korda); "We never use the word 'literary'—it's equal to 1 per cent of the population of the US for the decade in which it was published." Studies of this kind are necessarily neutral, and contain no literary criticism. Mr Sutherland declares that he also is neutral, and the blurb of his book states that he covers the "neglected area" of literary criticism as well.

To American eyes, British publishers, who are often unwilling even to reveal their authors' sales figures on demand, must seem crazy. British authors, too, one modestly selling and modestly contented English writer of my acquaintance was advised by her American publisher to go into analysis for seven years in order to develop a more properly aggressive attitude.

Mr Sutherland goes in detail into the American paperback revolution and the creation and marketing of superstars. Since the 1970s was the decade of the "pile-in"—the almost simultaneous lull of the novel, novel of the film, TV series of the novel—he has seen almost as many films as he has read novels. He does not set up to be a film critic, and few of his comments are more interesting than his remark on *The Godfather*, "judged by most critics to be better of its kind than the novel"; though he points out where, here as in *Jaws*, the plot and emphasis were changed for the purpose of film.

For that section of the female population that prefers it that way, Avon paperbacks have had huge success with "bodice-rippers"—stories of rape, flagellation and incest. All this may be entering to the rearguard action of passive male-dominated women determined to remain so. Yet the odd thing is, though Mr Sutherland does not mention it, that the blurb for a bodice-ripper quoted here could equally well have been used for a novel from the so-called liberated vanguard, by superselling Erika de Jong for example: "She knew what it meant to lose all pride, all pretence. And all 'ordinary' people who read him. He classes

Jaws with *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *Watership Down* as appealing to all the gals, hostilities and ambivalences engendered by the new consciousness of ecology. Michener's *Centennial* obviously played up to an American optimism and nationalism, while British "alternative histories", such as Deligton's *SSGB*, which postulates a Britain that did not win the war, reflect a depressed British feeling that "we might as well have lost the war, or not bothered to fight it". Harold Robbins's jet-set *romans à clef* about the rich and powerful, Mr Sutherland points out, portray tycoons and pin-ups only in terms of their social and sexual performances; they are the immature child's fantasy of what the grown-ups really do, or they are morbid imaginings of the loves of the gods. Many disaster stories have archaic elements in their titles in keeping with this mythic reference—*Inferno*, *Poseidon*, *Prometheus*, *Deluge*. The first meaning for "worship" in the OED was, by the way, "worship".

Robin Cook's *Come*, reflecting widespread mistrust of doctors and hospitals in America, "makes collective anxiety manageable", while the disaster craze plays to fears of hubris and fantasies of returning to some basic situation in which "instinctive or natural codes take precedence". The sexually extensible and thrown-together characters in *Slide or Flood or Deluge or Hear* were all, one might say, lords and ladies of the files. Mr Sutherland does not mention one possible reason for the craze for disasters: that they are all outlets for a very real fear, and are metaphors and rehearsals for the outbreak of World War III.

Mr Sutherland has an intriguing if far-fetched interpretation of the spate of novels and tied-in horror films about powerful, demonic children and adolescents—*Unnatural* books who persecute, terrify, sexually abuse or slaughter their "perfectly decent parents". He thinks these are outlets for a generation of mothers and fathers whose naturally mixed feelings about their offspring have been repressed by the cheery rationality of Dr Spock, for whom everything the child does is "normal" and explainable and nothing to worry about. Parents know inside that a lot happens that is not normal, and they sometimes hate and fear their children; and so the nightmare children in the books and films, and the justifiably violent and revolting measures used by the parents in self-defence, fill a deep need.

It's possible to reverse this explanation. In my experience it is not only parents, or even chiefly parents, who go to see the films of these particular bestsellers, but the children themselves. There is no censor for the age at which a child may read a book, and no X Certificate ever kept a well-grown fourteen-year-old out of the cinema. *Moy Omen* and its ominous siblings not fulfil the oedipal and related fantasies of children longing to persecute, terrify, etc. their "perfectly decent parents"?

Perhaps we are waging, as Mr Sutherland suggests, a subliminal war between the generations. But when he comes to women's fiction [sic] the evidence is even more depressing. There has been an upsurge in the past decade in the demand for "romances". Barbara Cartland has been required to step up her production, and Mills & Boon have boomed. (The men's equivalent of these chaste and mainly tales are the chaste and mainly tales of Alistair MacLean. One section of the population, men and women, seems to be trying to avoid sex in books. The other half seems to want as much of it as they can get. What determines the preference? How does the preference correlate with the actual experience of the reader? And who would benefit if these questions were answered?)

For that section of the female population that prefers it that way, Avon paperbacks have had huge success with "bodice-rippers"—stories of rape, flagellation and incest. All this may be entering to the rearguard action of passive male-dominated women determined to remain so. Yet the odd thing is, though Mr Sutherland does not mention it, that the blurb for a bodice-ripper quoted here could equally well have been used for a novel from the so-called liberated vanguard, by superselling Erika de Jong for example: "She knew what it meant to lose all pride, all pretence. And all 'ordinary' people who read him. He classes

control...". The two kinds of novel are the opposite sides of the same coin—the price paid for the sexual revolution, but having more to do with bondage than with liberation. Mr Sutherland rightly says that in the 1970s the women's movement's relation with fiction was "uneasy". Yet he believes that "potentially, the bestseller is a powerful instrument for change, instruction and enlightenment". And therefore, presumably, for something else—indeterminations, brainwashing? It is "subversive" now, Mr Sutherland says, in that it is "constantly jostling against the standards of conventional decency". I would have thought its constant jostling against "conventional" levels of violence would be a far more serious charge. If only conventional decency is at stake, then the bestseller is a relatively anodyne thing: "consolidates prejudice, provides comfort, is therapy, offers vicarious rewards or stimulus", according to Mr Sutherland. That sounds like a cross between a favourite aunt and a fruit machine, and not very dangerous.

Also it makes money. It's perhaps mean to suspect all those most hostile to bestsellerdom (for reasons other than the endorsement of violence) of sour grapes. Yet the only serious literary objection to it would be that it prevented minority fiction from being published. In time of recession, as now, that may actually be the case. But the reverse is traditionally true: bestsellers have subsidized the rest.

Bestsellerdom is a consequence of widespread literacy and a measure of democracy. Now any girl can look like Lady Diana Spencer, and the peasants have at long last learnt to read. Why it should bother those, peasants or otherwise, who want to buy different sorts of books and who are not forbidden to do so, it is hard to explain. There are unexpressed emotions in the least

literate reader, which may find an outlet in a Mills & Boon romance, while a bookish girl's identical feelings are released in reading *Wuthering Heights*. To believe that if bestsellerdom were quashed the whole population would be ready for the *Virgin Woolf de nos jours* is both unrealistic and totalitarian. Equally there is a child in everyone, even in the most "cultured", that is answered by the irrational appeal of the bestseller. If that child is not led, he is likely to turn nasty in the end. I would mistrust a person who never read any "trash", or never watched it on the television.

The root of the matter may be that the two cultural extremes—bestsellerdom and the campus-approved literary hierarchy—both seem to threaten the individual. Michael Holroyd in his *Observer* piece warned that modern textual criticism may be a totalitarian device within a computer culture that omits from the study of literature the individual on whom that literature at source depends. Literature, he wrote, was not a mirror of the times but "a reflection of the individual within those times"; a masterpiece is not defined by what it has in common with other books of the day, but "by what distinguishes it from the others"; but they are also distinguished from the others, by that that millions of people want to read them. Bestsellerdom, by reflecting the mass-psychic, the mob-psychic even, seems to threaten the individual in the way that some political and religious systems actually do. But the tension between the individual and society is older and more familiar than *Ulysses* 77 on a bookshelf, older even than Barbara Cartland or the idea of God. We can't expect it to be comfortably resolved. It would be disastrous either for the individual or for society, and in either case for art at all levels, if it were ever to be resolved.

Bernard Crick GEORGE ORWELL: A LIFE

1980 Yorkshire Post
Book of the Year

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£10.00

Secker & Warburg

Down and down we go

By Geoffrey Marshall

GEOFFREY SMITH and NELSON W. POLSKY:
British Government and its Discontents
202pp. Harper and Row. £7.95.
0 06 337016 6

Writing a book by listening to one's own conversation might be a very good idea if some fairly obvious conditions were fulfilled (such as remembering to turn on the tape recorder, and possibly not using it after midnight). This is the way, the authors say, their book began. Nelson Polsky and Geoffrey Smith, a leading American political scientist and a British journalist, have been doing this since the outcome of their discussions with each other on the short unhappy life of post-imperial Britain. What a large part of it sounds like is the journalist talking to the political scientist and of the remainder it must be admitted that a good deal has the ring of the political scientist listening to what he is being told by the journalist. The object of the discussion is "a middle-aged, middle-sized, formerly prosperous, presently semi-collectivized, freedom loving, intensely tribal modern society, with tired blood, pulverized civil servants, weak industries, strong unions and a flourishing high culture". This sums up our predicament well enough, though it is hard to think about all of it at once without getting confused (and perhaps thinking that we have middle-aged industries, freedom-loving unions, cultivated blood and tired civil servants). The result, in any event, is an absence of progress, innovation, reform and aggressive risk-taking and the reason for that is put down as a sense of pessimism and a lack of confidence in the nation's institutions—which with its blood and bureaucracy in such a state sounds scarcely surprising.

What is disappointing is that the examination of British political arrangements by an expert American eye, which the title and the presence of Professor Polsky lead us to expect, has been hobbled by a different enterprise that attempts to skim the surface of all the economic, social and political problems of the post-war period. So half the book is given over to short summaries of attempts to regulate the economy, manage

tion, Northern Ireland, Commonwealth issues and the EEC. This is by way of scene setting for the scrutiny of political machinery to the second half of the book. On many issues the information offered is fragmentary though useful enough for a potential audience who are unacquainted with recent British history but have a general understanding of politics, as the publishers put it. Occasionally even this class of reader may be surprised by the summing-up of events. The account of the Scottish devolution legislation, for example, surmises that "Scottish national feeling was defused by the mere offer of an assembly" and "That Parliament should spend the better part of two sessions discussing various devolution bills was evidence that it took Scotland seriously." But why did the Scots fail to vote for reform? To suppose that not giving Scotland a Parliament convinced the Scots that England took them seriously might sound an odd inference even to those who understand something of politics without knowing its details.

Some other causal explanations are intriguing and might even deserve (if anything) the term "insightful", though they are not in every case open to verification. The British romantic attachment to the Arab and its attendant policies, for instance, are put down to "a history of semi-oriental adventuring in the Middle East, of meddling about in the Holy Land for fun and profit". The number of citizens affected by such feelings must by now be outnumbered by an even larger company who are differently moved by the more recent history of Middle Eastern semi-recreational adventuring in the United Kingdom for fun and profit.

The political nub of the discussion is approached in Part Two with the promised examination of British government, Parliament, the political parties and public administration. But although there are some useful and interesting points made, particularly on party and electoral matters such as the feasibility of primary elections, when we get to the nub, the nub of the discussion recedes. There is a short discussion of the relations between government and Parliament (the assertion here, incidentally, that there has been a "convention" that a

government is entitled to have its way in Parliament is an odd, or at least unclear use of the term "convention"). There then follow some suggestions that Parliament would do better if it had "strong select committees which could amend legislation and influence the allocation of public money". Certainly Parliament would do better and government would do worse; but there is a question about how such powers are to be brought into existence and sustained. This is certainly a worthwhile question but there is no room for it to be discussed here, because the discussion has to hurry on to other matters. The Bill of Rights issue is raised, for example, but is then dispatched in two pages. Within this space the present situation is misstated, the arguments for changing it are unclearly presented, and the relationship between decisions of the European Human Rights Court and the law of the United Kingdom is obscured.

A short final chapter returns to the question of diagnosis and the recipe for the recovery of confidence. In Victorian times, it is noted, Britain was devoted to risk-taking entrepreneurship, and was able to withstand the pressures of the Luddites and Chartists. So what is stifling entrepreneurial enterprise and innovation nowadays? What are the brakes carrying on their backs that does not not not eling about the needs of Europe, Scandinavia and the less pessimistic Luddites and Chartists? Perhaps the authors should follow the present usage of British politics and name names, but readers are left to guess.

It seems ungenerous to complain about what is missing from a book that is intended as a work for the general reader rather than the academic student of politics. But perhaps the two could have blended more satisfactorily if the author had advanced on a narrower front. Those who know the work of Nelson Polsky would relish a more detailed examination of the "convention" of British government: its discontents can be chronicled by anybody.

commentary

Art, arms and the infant

By Peter Conrad

Parade: An Evening of French Musical Theatre
Metropolitan Opera, New York

David Hockney: Paintings and Designs for 'Parade'
André Emmerich Gallery, New York and (from May 5) Riverside Studios, Ham-
mersmith

Having spliced together three works as idiosyncratic as Satie's ballet *Parade*, Poulenc's surreal satire *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and Ravel's nursery fantasy *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* to make a triple bill, the Met's initial task was to invent some plausible relation between them. Nureyev, originally engaged as choreographer, wanted to stage the opening work as a dramatized biography of the avant-gardists who, in collaborating on it, virtually invented theatrical modernism: Satie, Massine, Cocteau, Picasso, Diaghilev and Apollinaire (in whose programme note the word "surrealism" was used for the first time). But Nureyev was unable to persuade his own collaborators, John Dexter the director and David Hockney the designer, and withdrew. Dexter then devised a thematic linkage between the works, arguing from their proximity in time.

Parade was performed in 1917, the year when Ravel, on military service near Verdun, first read the Cocteau fantasy which later became his opera text; Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles* was written in 1903 but performed only in 1917, when the author supplied it with a preface connecting its procreative moral with the current war, and Poulenc composed the music for it during a subsequent war, in 1944. Together, the works seemed to Dexter to comically imitate and challenge to the slough in which the adults were engaged, an assertion both of art's redemptiveness and its source in infantile fantasy. Hockney's sets enact this opposition of values: a gaudy circus arena (for *Parade*), a palm-planted Mediterranean quay (for *Les Mamelles*), an enchanted garden (for *L'Enfant*), entrenched always within tangles of barbed wire — a playpen inside a war zone. Dexter's scenes, unlike and closer off the into when the intrigue who leads Satie's, reveals: returns to save; Ravel's errand child, and restore him to his mother's care.

It's a brilliant scheme, though its first effect is to rob the works of their individuality. Satie's ballet, the lightest of the three parts, suffers the least. Apollinaire claimed that the alliance of Picasso's designs and Massine's choreography manifested a new spirit of surrealism; it therefore introduces the different surrealisms of the two operas — the absurdist logic of *Les Mamelles*, the associative dreaming of *L'Enfant*. But *Parade* was also the juncture between surrealism and cubism. Satie made music from the "maniacal rhythms" of "the dances" of the "parabolas" of sound described by him; the effect of a type writer (operated in Dexter's staging by a red-wigged Cocteau, presumably writing *L'Enfant*), the hum of dynamo and the hour of locomotives — and saw in "ballet" a metaphorization of movement. The American girl in the original choreography, who's absent from the Met version, catches a train, drives a car and stops in hold-up, dancing with mechanical voluptuosity to equal the music.

Poulenc's domestic life turned bodies into angular cubist collages. The American marriages were a symphony, and one of his colleagues in Cocteau's programme — exemplifying the monstrous metamorphosis of the "whereby" which people commune with objects — was allied by Picasso as a horse, with two dancers erupting from inside his body. Though some of Poulenc's designs are carried on as props, Hockney, deferring to Dexter's scheme, ignores Satie's pistole-driven impulsion, and draws instead from earlier Picasso. His lumber, tricoloured charcolons (not an invention of the French) of 1917, but a descendant of the festive, multi-benches and moody, pinky, smoky

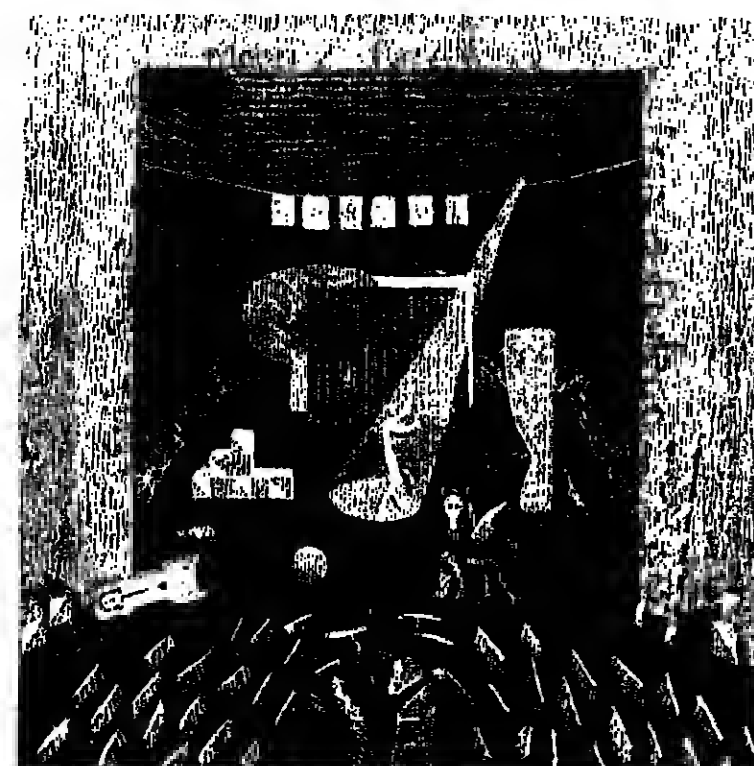
ated actors who populated Picasso's work in 1905. Hockney's lurid, like the pierrots of Art Nouveau, is a sentimental angel, a figure of solemn divination, not, like the acrobats of Satie's eubism, an exponent of human double-jointedness.

Turning their ballet into a circus side-show and its score into an engineered din, Cocteau and Satie, like Brecht with his opera costing threepence, intended a cynical reduction of art's romantic status as spiritual revelation. (In Brecht's *Mahagonny*, too, a honky-tonk piano in a saloon inspires someone to snarl, "Now that's what I call immortal art.") Theirs was to be a cheap theatre, peddling low-dry diversion to a public which in any case declines to buy. In Cocteau's text, the passers-by who are being enticed into the booth by the desperate paraders eventually disperse, refusing to become customers. They think they've already seen the show, mistaking the ad for the actuality. Since Dexter needs to make Satie's dead-end an induction, a passage into the drama ahead, he necessarily elicits this irony; and though his production sets the values of art against those of war, one of the points of *Parade* was the identity between them, its modernity was aggressive, pun-milliter, Cocteau called it the greatest battle of the war, and said that "our real front was in Paris, in Montparnasse." Using it as an overture, with the circus troupe displaying the props for the succeeding operas rather than touting their own shoddy wares, Dexter weakens it.

There's cogency, though, in Dexter's link between *Parade* and *Les Mamelles*. Both are surreal manifestos for the theatre, *Parade* devaluing drama to display and music to machine-made sound effects, *Les Mamelles* pleading (in the words of the stage manager) for "changes of tone from the pathetic to the burlesque, and the reasonable use of unlikelyhoods." The characters of *Parade* are, like the wound-up, frenetic American-gals, mechanomorphic; the heroine of *Les Mamelles* undergoes a corresponding sexual metamorphosis, willing herself to turn into a man. Whim is surreally sovereign: when a journalist asks Thérèse's husband how he manages to procreate without the co-operation of female organs, he replies simply "La volonté." Yet Satie's cubist mechanization of people also recurs here, for the husband's procreative feats are a triumph of manufacture. He generates a journalist, for instance, by tearing up newspapers, mixing them in a cradle, stirring in a bottle of ink, stiffening the concoction with a pea-holder for a backbone, some squishy paste for brains, and a pair of scissors to do duty as a tongue. This is a cubist birth, like the recomposition of Duchamp's nude descending a staircase into a diagrammatic friction of abstract shapes, and the journalist's first report, appropriately, is of an artistic innovation similar to that by which he was fabricated — "It is learned from Montparnasse that M. Poulenc is making a picture which moves just as his chair does."

Apollinaire's language derives surreal effects from cubist habits because of its constant recourse to puns, both verbal ("Mendicines, elle est mure des cygnes") and visual (the Freudian pipe which the gendarme orders the husband — currently costumed as his own wife — to tick only the pun is a cubist whimsy because it's made from the overlapping and interbreeding of words, just an object in cubist pictures but on one another, losing their own outline and integrity; and the pun is surreal because it discloses the implicit underlife of language, in its ambiguous misrepresentation of meanings. The final between *Parade* and *L'Enfant* is a metaphorical quibble: one "whereby" they're in Zanzibar or Paris, since places like Colosseum, confoundingly co-exist in the cubist space of Cubism).

Dexter willfully presents *Les Mamelles* as a celebration of the strains inaugurated by *Parade*, with Thérèse as a Midas who, offending her balloon buyers and spilling a beard to replace them, and the god, in accord with the production's uplifting theme, the battered becomes an open air cabaret where couples dance beneath a bombardment of balloons which are Thérèse's recovered pleasures. Yet Poulenc insisted that his music had "decubitized" Apollinaire, and in cleverly attaching *Les Mamelles* to the works on either side of it, Dexter has



David Hockney's set for Parade

misconstrued it. Apollinaire's text is scintillatingly absurd and arbitrary; Poulenc's music — in the state manager's initial cantata, or in the solemn ensemble movements of the Presto and Lacouf — movingly contradicts it. Apollinaire's gendarme, for instance, nonsensically claims the husband as "la belle fille". But Poulenc's setting of the joke is yeanningly lyrical. For Apollinaire, creation is a cubist mongrelizing of inanimate objects, like Lauréat's promiscuous coupling of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table. (Satie too was infatuated by umbrellas. When he died, more than a hundred were found stored in his house.) But Poulenc's music celebrates creation as a causal miracle. The artist is a procreator, bringing to birth, as the stage manager says, a play which is a universe's bowing its own creator, and the polyphyllogogical Thérèse, enjoining the audience to make babies, is the artist's patron saint. In spite of Apollinaire's coarse profanity, there's a scored favour to Poulenc's score which implies a distanced between Thérèse and his other operatic heroines, the sacrificial Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites* (brilliantly staged at the Met by Dexter). The grace Duchamp's nude descending a staircase into a diagrammatic friction of abstract shapes, and the journalist's first report, appropriately, is of an artistic innovation similar to that by which he was fabricated — "It is learned from Montparnasse that M. Poulenc is making a picture which moves just as his chair does."

From here, with Poulenc's musical modification of Apollinaire, it's a natural progression to *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, which could be interpreted as a criticism of both surrealism and cubism. The surreal, unstable liberation of which makes Thérèse direct herself of her sexual impediments, and declares that she'll have herself made a municipal councillor, unleashes the rebellious riot of Cocteau's misbehaving child, who destroys his mother, his own father, and proclaims his own vicious, adoral liberty: "No more lesson! No more dull! I am free, free, wicked and free!" The sortilèges — the damaged or harassed possessions which rise up to accuse and hunt the maniac child — are the solid objects of cubism, (and satie) dancers, Ravel's anthropomorphic furniture, recedes Satie's mechanomorphic people. The surrealism of Dall, often depicts the agency of objects — a melting witch, the personification of a flower from a "creeching" egg, shell in "Metamorphosis of Narcissus". Cocteau's fantasy concerns the spells of cures which these oppressed things, confidently treated by us as male, objects and "personae", cast on us. Objects, accordingly, unite to combat their human oppressors: an armchair and a Louis XV credenza vie to rid themselves of the child and his panting beast and for the child's "their agreement" by dancing together.

The symbolic use of inanimate objects is accomplished by

Ravel's glorious music, which confers a voice on dumb things and inanimate creatures. Ravel devises a musical language for elemental or vegetable nature — the sparkly coloratura of the expiring fire, the brassy rumbling lament of the tree trunk wound by the child's knife. The climax of this tender elegy for those who have been deprived of voices is therefore the aviable mimicry of the animals, who learn articulation from the child's panic and in their concluding chorale pronounce the word he has uttered, the primal "Ma-ma".

After the squib of Satie's ballet, which idealizes creativity with engineering and cubist ticker tape printers and aeroplane propellers as orchestral instruments, *Les Mamelles* allies creativity with procreation, and *L'Enfant* pursues the creative instinct to its origin in love. The princess in the boy's story book is killed when he defaces the volume. Her reproach to him demonstrates that created characters need the sustenance of a love he has angrily and finally withdrawn. *Les Mamelles*, with its ramp-loads of babies produced in the husband's industrial factory, sees infancy as a condition of bludge, irrational, surreal insanity. Its freedom is also economic abundance: one of the husband's offspring, stumbling in its orb, has already enriched its father by hoarding skinned milk. As Dall's ecological antia declare, the surrealism of *L'Enfant* behaves like an incontinent infant. Dada made baby-talk — the paternal variant of Cocteau's chanted "Mama" — into an esoteric theory. *Les Mamelles* justifies this regression; but the childlike of *L'Enfant* is subtler and wiser, a return to the romantic conviction that genius is the recovery of all will of childhood's visionary credulity. Cocteau's fable looks briskly eductive: the bad boy who won't do his homework is ghettoized by the boggys and made to learn respect for household gods (and for the household gods who guard them). But, considered another way, the boy's moral progress may be a loss child by the wallpaper, terrorized by arithmetical impiety, revolted by the elements, the boy is still in the aviable world of numinous joy and fear from which adulthood and reason permanently exile us. This is one of the reasons why, in Ravel's setting of it, his return to the home at the end is painful as well as blissful — a doom as much as a happy ending.

Dexter's production dejects the child with an outside cubist furniture of building blocks, moved about by the pierrots from the Satie ballet. *L'Enfant* is proverbially regarded as unstageable, and Dexter has solved such problems as making the wallpaper not only move but, snug by slyly avoiding them. He ranges the singers, also in pierrot garb, along the sides of the Met proscenium, and then they give a superb performance while the object on stage behaves. They're vocalizing, about onstage. Since the magic meaning of the

work is the implantation of voices in objects which don't naturally have them, it's a pity that Dexter has separated the two, but it's not easy to conceive of an alternative. Ned Rorem suggests that the only medium for *L'Enfant* is the photograph. Perhaps its proper theatre is ideal, imaginary, disembodied, for with its garrulous teapops and buzzing, croaking, animating moaning garden it's a domestic version of the vast romantic symphonies of Scriabin and Mahler, in which all nature is incited to song.

Hockney narrowed the empty stage of the Met into an extremely coloured playground, girded by Dexter's alienating barbed wire. The production became a triumphal arch, with the ends of the three composers printed in light around its sides. His scenery, like that for the Olydebourne *Zauberflöte*, where ancient Egypt is transposed to contemporary southern California, has a magpie's delft eclecticism. There are initiative tributes to Picasso's cubism for the original *Parade*, to Braque's cubist bodies (one of which opens a trap-door to disclose the stage manager for *Les Mamelles*), and (to the Zanzibar set) to the Fauvist landscapes of Matisse and Der. Hockney is specially disingenuous about his borrowings: "Some people say it's a quote", he remarks of his reliance on Dufy; "I say it's a steal". The exhibition of his work on the production contains an abundance of tantalizing ideas which were discarded — studies of Tipote's Pichia drawings in the Pichet Collection, and versions of Picasso's positive silhouette banquets.

The design distinguishes tacitly between the different atmospheres of the three works. Hockney's *Parade* is a native athletic circus, but *Les Mamelles* is smarter and more sophisticated: the Zanzibar scene is an excerpt from Hockney's own travel sketches, and in that provisional set he has even projected a fence of postcards to border the space. As Thérèse's husband outgazes his offspring, so Hockney has set out a series of "9 loose babies", cradled and elderly, from ads for German clogs, to fill the waiting prams. Hockney makes the music of *L'Enfant* by drawing childishly, Lisa becomes an instrument of romance and domination — exaggerated perspective makes the roof slant sideways and inclines all shapes away towards the offending boy — and the unrealism of Hockney's colour has the living vividness of childlike perception. The tree trunks in the garden are red, their foliage blue. In the theatre they were not so subliminally radiant because they were flooded with light of the same colour; in the exhibition their cut-out, slightly tilted shapes look authentically like a child's scribble of the world's theatrical model set, after all, toys for grown-ups.

Dexter and Hockney return to the Met in December for another triple bill, complete with Stravinsky's *Rossini*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Sacre du Printemps*, and though the music of *L'Enfant* may seem to make when separated from Dexter's production, Hockney's paintings and designs for *Parade*, now at the Edinburgh City, will be on show at the Riverside Studios in London from May 5 to June 7.

David Hockney is bringing the street and the artist in the National Portrait exhibition, *Portraits of Today: Recent Acquisitions*, from May 1. The exhibition includes portraits of Tom Stoppard by Howard Mager and Elizabeth Bower, by Andre Dupert, and photographs of Samuel Beckett by Paul Joyce and of Anthony Powell, Eric Acker, and James Herlihy by Fay Godwin.

The Arts Council's *Clarendon* exhibition, reviewed in *Commentary* on January 22, while it was at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, is now at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens. The new show at the Whitworth is *From Manet to Toulouse-Lautrec: French Painting 1860-1900*, from May 25.

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commentary

Playwright of the western world

By Roy Foster

The Seagull
Royal Court theatre

"It is like hearing a Mozart serenade, originally scored for a string orchestra and two horns, played by a wood ensemble. All the notes are there, but what is the point of such re-orchestration?" The reservation expressed by a recent TLS reviewer regarding some of Ronald Hingley's translations for *The Oxford Chekhov* might be echoed at the thought of an Irish version of *The Seagull*, especially at a time when the interpretation of Chekhov's original texts is still a matter of controversy. Best, then, to say at once that the conception is triumphantly vindicated by a marvellous evening's theatre. But the reasons for Thomas Kilroy's success deserve examination; for the single which he has chosen follows a line of connection which is evident in the effect of Maria Edgeworth on Turgenev, and Turgenev on Frank O'Connor, effects which have to do with content as much as technique.

In late nineteenth-century Ireland, as in Russia, large houses were episodically used by a peripatetic and insecure landed class. The sense of landlordism had been changed by legislation, but the connections between peasant and land-owner had dimensions intelligible to the rational order (and often to the participants); an intellectual element subsisted on the fringe of middle-class life which was not represented in Ireland. It is these assonances which Mr Kilroy's treatment plays upon, and which keep the coherence and integrity of the piece intact, despite a number of decisive changes.

In his version represents a further translation than simple transposition from *Seagull* to Ireland. Logically enough, references to Balzac and Zola become Dickens and Wilde; Collette; Maupassant's *Sur Face* becomes *Villiers*; the Trigorin figure, here an English novelist called Aston, compares himself to Meredith instead of Turgenev; the husband of Dr Hleky (Dr Dom) comes from O'Connor's Faust, but Moore's *Melodies*. However, this is by no means all. The sense of provincialism, so keen in Chekhov, is lifted to the milieu of an East Galway estate where the metropolis is London for some of the characters, Dublin for others. This is best expressed by the Soda figure, here appearing as Peter Desmond, superannuated Assistant Registrar of Deeds, now impatiently ageing on the family estate. The references are more specific than in the original; the character is more fully established. His colloquy on the pleasures of the town becomes "taking a stroll from College Green to the Club; meeting old friends from the country; you know the changes are as sweeping as



"Three King's Daughters" ("Inside my father's close-fly away O my heart: you've apple blossom blows! So sweet") — one of the pictures in the album Edward Byrne-Jones made in his late twenties for Sophia Dalrymple. He met her in the saloon of his sister, Sara Pringle, at Little Holland House, Kensington, where he was introduced by Russell in 1857. Other members of the circle included Tennyson, Browning, Thackeray, Ruskin, Carlyle and Holman Hunt. The Little Holland House Album, which consists of eight poems transcribed and illustrated by the artist, has been published in a beautiful facsimile with introduction and notes by John Christinn 140pp. The Dalrymple Press, Leuchie, North Berwick, East Lothian, Scotland. £38.00 (050731 0 0).

now, I feel a new man when I take the cab from the Broadstone to Kildare Street". Elsewhere a more extended comparison is worth giving with the original (as in the Oxford translation), which reads as follows:

Irina. But what can you do in town?
Sorin. Nothing much, but still. [Laughs.] They're laying the foundation stone of the new council building and so on. I just want to get out of this backwater for a couple of hours. I've ordered my carriage for one o'clock, so we can leave together.

At the Royal Court, we hear:
Isobel. You can't imagine. For Heaven's sake, no-one ever stays in Dublin out of the season.

Peter. Oh, I shall have lots of people to see.

Isobel. Pray, who are these people?

Peter. Well, Teddy Berrowes for one. Always in the Club, Teddy, capital fellow, Teddy.

Isobel. Oh, my God.

Peter. Might actually go down to Greytown to stay with the Cousin Hacketts. Always inviting me down to visit. Never seem to find time. Do me good; the ozone. Put me feet up and look at the sea. Ho-ho. Old Father Neptune. Few of the changes are as sweeping as

this, but nearly all work as well. Here Chekhov's social and psychological tone is maintained; elsewhere there is bold innovation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the shift of emphasis which implicitly changes the contested question of what the play is "about". No longer is it simply a psychological study of dissatisfaction, nor even (as David Magarshack has recently had it) a comedy about the nature and aims of creative art at the centre of the conflicts and discussions there is, subtly stated, the notion of Irish identity.

This is audacity done by altering Constantine's (Treplov's) own abortive play as performed in Act I: Chekhov's parody of Solovoyev and the Russian Symbolists becomes in Kilroy's version an early Yeatsian fantasy about ancient Celtic gods. Irina's comments about "something terribly modern" and "experimental rubbish" are in Madame Isobel Desmond's mouth "as of those Celtic things" and "Hibernian drivel" ("Where is 'Banba'?" asks Anna Massey, penetratingly and hilariously, in a line given in Kilroy's printed text). Later, in their great quarrel, her son is "an ignorant little Irish wretch". And, significantly, while in the original she called him a "decadent" (the epithet for the Symbolists), Kilroy has him use the word against her theatre (implying English as well as metropolitan).

The theme similarly alters the doctor's remarks about foreign travel in Act 4. It is

no longer his visit to Glemo, and his sense of the communal street-life there, that prompts his memory of Constantine's play and his question about Nina; instead he has been to Paris, and heard about de Joubaingville's lectures on Celtic mythology at the Collège de France. The sequence of ideas is as adept as in the original: the novel themes of this version come through once more. And behind Constantine's despair about the inadequacy of his art is his belief that he knows nothing of "the people" whose myths and low language he is attempting to reinterpret.

Added to this is a coda about the Land League, rent arrears, the closure of Big houses, and Parnellism, which is just retained enough to not shift the play's concern too far from "art" to "society" (or from *The Seagull* to *The Cherry Orchard*). Here as elsewhere the Irish tone adapts beautifully to the Russian. It is, for instance, quite correct that Anna Devlin's hectoring Cousin Gregory (né Shammyev), as estate manager, is in a relation of the Desmonds and yet speaks with a brogue, while they use the accents of the Ascendancy: it is the variety of connection found, for instance, in Somerville and Ross's Knox family, whose social and historical implications do not translate to England.

The occasional drawbacks in the Kilroy version have nothing to do with this kind of translation, where his touch is so subtly sure. It is, however, a pity that he follows the old Constantine Garnett translation by making the *Hamlet* by-play between mother and son in Act I a more anodyne exchange than Treplov's quotation of "honeying and making love over the nasty sty": the latter, reinstated by both Magarshack and Hingley, is a deliberate statement of the Oedipal theme central to Constantine's inadequacy. There are also alterations in Aston/Trigorin's long speech which make him admit to second-nature more unequivocally than in the original, an important change. And in Madame Isobel's departure at the end of Act 3, the emphasis is on the failure of her visit and her insecurity about her son, rather than on her stings and self-centredness.

The east, however, is strong enough to carry changes in emphasis which might otherwise be worrying. Amongst such changes the *seagull* metaphor without becoming even (as David Magarshack has recently had it) a comedy about the nature and aims of creative art at the centre of the conflicts and discussions there is, subtly stated, the notion of Irish identity.

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The Irish dimension is further imbedded by Genna Jackson's sets, authoritatively conveying Celtic twilight in Act I and moving on to suggest marvellously the interior of Irish Big Houses, all dingy colours and odd pieces of gaudy furniture. The play is directed by Max Stafford-Clark with care, restraint, and — in another contentious area — a firm recognition of its comic elements. But the evening is really comic-historical, and a kind of historical comedy, death-bed treatise. David Hockney's set is a remarkable reconciliation of the two, with a darkly peccolous, almost as much as a firm recognition of its comic elements. But the evening is really comic-historical, and a kind of historical comedy, death-bed treatise. David Hockney's set is a remarkable reconciliation of the two, with a darkly peccolous, almost as much as a firm recognition of its comic elements.

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The evolutionist's field-work

By Redmond O'Hanlon

CHARLES DARWIN (Editor)
The Zoology of the Voyage of HMS Beagle
Volume 1 Part I. 111pp. 32 plates. Part II
96pp. 35 plates.
0 908603 003

Volume 2 Part III. 156pp. 50 plates.
0 908603 02 9
Volume 3 Part IV. 172pp. 29 plates. Part V.
51pp. 20 plates.
0 908603 002

Nova Pacific/Canongate Publishing, 17
Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh, E370.

These magnificent pages were first published in nineteenth fascicles between February 1838 and October 1843. Darwin set the ambitious project in motion in 1837, seeking and receiving the support of the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Derby and Professor William Whewell, and on August 16 he called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Spring Rice, who told him that the Treasury had granted him £1,000. Even this was insufficient — he and his publisher had to put up further money themselves and it is unlikely that more than a hundred copies of the work were printed. It was never released and apart from a 1975 facsimile of the small Part V on reptiles and amphibians, is now practically unobtainable. The last copy to appear in auction sold for some £4,500; and there are a mere nineteen sets in the libraries of America.

This is the best kind of reprint: intelligently chosen to fill a real gap in scholarly resources, completely faithful to the original, magnificently made. Sir Charles Fleming has provided a small foreword and Roger G. Chapman, its scholar-publisher (former Librarian of the National Museum of New Zealand), an excellent introduction. Chapman reminds us that only half of the purpose of this famous voyage was scientific, the other being to show the flag. And he rightly points out that it was Darwin's evident suitability as a gentleman companion to Captain FitzRoy, which really secured him his great opportunity as a naturalist. Indeed, FitzRoy's outwardly simple philanthropic wish to encourage the advancement of knowledge by offering to share his already cramped cabin with a "finished naturalist" cloaked a personal necessity desperate and complex enough to have sprung from the imagination of an early Conrad. FitzRoy, fearing that he suffered from an inner plague spot of inherited weakness, or concealed deficiency in natural courage, laid revealed when his uncle Lord Castlereagh had committed suicide, needed a share of his cabin who would help him to pierce his naval self against his inner self in the loneliness of command, on the vastness of the South Ocean, where, in September 1831, his immediate predecessor had shot himself.

Despite FitzRoy's genuine uneasiness that, according to the phrenological theories of Lavater, the shape of his potential companion's nose marked him out as unequal to such a psychic challenge, Darwin seems to have discerned this first role reasonably well. His qualification as a gentleman was impeccable — when some floundered misjudged FitzRoy's occupation, Darwin wrote amiably in his diary, "A

person who could possibly mistake Captain FitzRoy for a smuggler would never perceive any difference between a Lord Chesterfield and his valet". And his open and cordial boyish enthusiasm, his delighted absorption in the detail of the external world, which cocooned him from many of its threats, made him equally dependable as a companion.

In one of the many incidental pictures of life on board the Beagle to be found in these volumes, FitzRoy himself is persuaded, near the coast of Patagonia, to draw a freshly harpooned new species of porpoise, which Darwin later named the *Delphinus FitzRoyi*. But the young Darwin was powerless to prevent FitzRoy's temporary resignation of command in "a morbid depression of spirits and a loss of all decision and resolution", and neither was his later friendship able to forestall FitzRoy's eventual suicide.

In his other role, however, these volumes alone would have been enough to place him in the forefront of English naturalist-travellers. Simply in his fish collections, which interested him least of all and one half of which were in any case destroyed by looting preservation, there were twenty-five new species and seven new genera. These are described by Leonard Jenyns (the village-drygymon brother-in-law of Henslow, Darwin's Cambridge mentor) with a breathless timidity and an over-anxious profusion of detail which is in marked contrast to the style of Darwin's own geological introductions and extensive field notes to the various parts.

In Darwin himself we detect an easy confidence beneath his happy professions of incompetence. He will suddenly adopt a thoroughly unofficial tone — in the *Birds* volume, for instance, ostensibly by John Gould, but actually written by Darwin himself when the great illustrator and his equally talented wife left for their expedition to Australia in 1838, he remarks of a robin-like bird in Chile that it is "held in superstitious fear by the Chilotes, on account of its strange and varied cries. There are three very distinct kinds: — one is called 'chiduco', and is an omen of good; another 'bultre', which is extremely unfavourable; and a third, which I have forgotten." He admits to having "skinned and cooked" the very first specimen of the *Rhea Darwinii* known to science, before his "memory returned" and he was relieved to find that "the head, neck, wings, many of the larger feathers, and a large part of the skin, had been preserved."

But in general his habit of meticulous observation is seldom relaxed, and it extends from recording the persistent smell about his all pocket-handkerchiefs of a buck whose skin he had carried home in it "every time, when first unfolded, for a space of one year and seven months, I distinctly perceived the odour. This appears an astonishing instance of the permanence of some matter, which in its nature, nevertheless, must be most subtle and volatile" — to the flight of the great condors as they "moved in large curved sweeping circles, descending and ascending without once flapping. As several glided close over my head, I intently watched, from a distance, the separate and terminal feathers of the wings; if there had been the least vibratory

movement, their outlines would have been blended together, but they were seen distinct against the blue sky."

There are also serious intimations of the *Origin of Species*. Darwin gave his fossil mammals to Professor Richard Owen to describe. This appalling man, with globular eyes like a cod, horribly diseased with professional jealousy and the only one of his later opponents whom Darwin would eventually bring himself to hate in earnest, was yet a great comparative anatomist, perhaps second only to Cuvier. His most spectacular feat was his 1839 prediction, from one six-inch-long fragment of bone from New Zealand, that a giant flightless bird had once existed. After a period of gaudy ridicule, in 1843 a practically complete skeleton of collected bones arrived in a box from a missionary, almost exactly matching Owen's description and later producing, amongst other more serious scientific consequences, the inspiration for H. G. Wells's *Atopos Island*.

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The Figure in the Carpet

In recapturing awake town, humil- and ur-hiscape first dreamed
If any he ten years ago, the self-given plugging in to the true processes, the deep Yes whose warped hills, roundwhe, smuggling coonhs, halfmuffled corner shops and ferries have been there since the first age waiting for you.

But you twig where the scenes came from without a skerrick of symbol-skill in crack the code of their eloquence, their bowel-stirring music for the eye of mental structures, and shimmering logos, oil glistened twice.

But you can't quite make it out from the ground of whatever low supplanted burgundy axminster and such; neither is it the tone of tremor recovered nor yet the cough of sleep, graveyard's grey never Dutch uncle, but in the right light it can make your moist flesh creep, the hoarse froe freezing and the mind rees in neutral without direction: slapping you through and back, like a drowned language or a bone vole edge-on to you.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe

Epitaph on a First Book of Verse

I
My friend, like others in times past, you have a lean and hungry post. We know your kind too well — the obscure tongue dissembling guile the loose conspiracy of syllables drawn together by ragged stanzas, roman numerals, and many other classes, set in the same climate, yet on isolated islands, created with such arbitrary difference.

These three volumes, so well written, so ravishly illustrated, underline Michael Ruse's remarks in his brilliant *The Darwinian Revolution: Science Red in Tooth and Claw* (1979) on the speed with which the young Darwin entered the contemporary high "intellectual network", and Darwin's own editing and contributions emphasize the notchalant ease with which he dominated that elite.

We have seen your kind too often. Collectors find you in the back-rooms of crowded junk-shops (especially on the lower shelves) forced downwards by the weight of old encyclopaedias and the bulks of pin-up girls. All those — books, mouldy calendars, music-secreas ambitions turned to dust. If you were older, twenty years older, or even ten, the price would tempt us — we would buy you and mark you up.

Thereafter, abandon your pretensions and praise the artificial rose. Though petals turned to the window may survive in the summer heat, the plastic blossoms in the hall will never fade. Made in the image of reality, there, in its rubber pol, the replica leans out from the vase with such odorous authority. Hold in waggles the artificial rose, praise it — remember the event of what it is not.

Even if it did nothing else, this book fiddled with reflections of reality, left a finger-print on the waxen apple, kept a place, in the queue for the big names. And up to bloody junk-shop once a collector hold it for a moment — knowing that in sunlight somewhere, quail boys are leaning their bikes against the bridge-mill to watch a wood-chip-drop and float down drain.

Nicholas Hasluck

From the social point of view

By Stephen Koss

HAROLD PERKIN
The Structured Crowd
Essays in English Social History
238pp. Brighton: Harvester. £20.
0 8527 423 9

Twenty-five years and eleven stimulating exercises separate the opening and closing essays in this impressive collection. Harold Perkin began in 1953 by asking, rather hesitatingly, "What is Social History?" he concludes in 1977 with a comprehensive institutional and bibliographical survey which effectively answers the question. As assembled here, Perkin's two writings and addresses throughout the intervening period testify to a steady process of development, both methodological and territorial.

"Social history in Britain has undoubtedly come a long way since 1953, and it would be hypocritical not to rejoice in its current popularity," declares Perkin, who some less remains aware that the discipline "will have much further to go before it catches up with the Americans or the French". By precept and example, he is entitled to claim a large measure of credit for the achievement and, especially, for the respectability it has won. Digested by project grants from the Social Science Research Council and by a life peerage for Alan Brinkley, the president of the Social History Society, and a worthy dedicatee of this volume, social history has been further recognized by the creation of several academic chairs. Fittingly enough, Perkin's at the University of Lancaster — was the first. He confesses to having "elected" by the label he himself affixed to it, but the liberty he took was wholly pardonable and, in retrospect, indeed laudable.

The "Cinderella of English historical studies", which remains "something of an orphan", social history has spawned its own journals, professional organizations, and frequent conferences. Best of all, it has produced a vast and lively literature, to which Perkin has been a distinguished contributor. Apart from his books, there are his occasional pieces, which alterately cast him as Cinderella's fairy godmother and her Prince Charming. Scattered in an array of books and periodicals, and several previously unpublished, they admirably complement each other by a variety of style, a sophisticated diversity of sources, and the rigorous standards

which they concurrently set and meet.

Liberated from the strained metaphors that encumbered him at the start of his career, when he made his "first faltering attempt . . . to define" his subject, Perkin has gone on to grapple confidently with increasingly vast problems. "Social history is not a part of history," he grandly proclaimed at the outset. Instead, paraphrasing Arthur Redford (and thereby instancing the penchant for "name-dropping" for which he eventually took himself to task), he described it as nothing less than "all the history from the social point of view". What exactly did he mean?

At this early stage, Perkin was better able to stipulate what he wished to avoid than what he wished to achieve. He eschewed "antiquarianism, the compilation of undigested facts in unpalatable lists", which often passed for social history in those dark days. Nor was he prepared to limit himself and his fledgling discipline by conceiving of society in terms of a class system, especially with a Marxist determinism. On the one hand, he acknowledged that "the social historian cannot ignore the social implications of politics, legislation, and administration"; on the other, reacting sharply against Seeley's dictum ("History is past politics: politics is present history"), he cautioned that "economic and political activities are not the social historians' first interest". In the last analysis, as he would retrospectively concede, he took refuge in a series of metaphorical conceptions, some as less "tendentious" than unwieldy.

Remarkably soon, however, he had successfully extricated himself from this morass, and was giving substance to his enthusiasm. An article on "The Origins of the Popular Press", first published in 1957, pointed the way. Dealing with "a phenomenon grounded in social and economic fact", and fraught with political implications, it stretched the boundaries of social history. Never one to wallow in a "nostalgia for an imaginary past", Perkin deflected solid evidence to break the "causal thread" that was supposed to have existed between the Education Act of 1870 and the rise of a mass-circulation daily press. It required only no acquaintance with the work of R. K. Webb and others to dispel the "suburban myth" that the working-class element had been illiterate before 1870. Similarly, it required only a perusal of earlier newspapers and broadsheet ballads to ascertain that sensationalism and bold typography had long predated the founding of the Daily Mail

in 1896. To the extent that Alfred Harmsworth (the future Lord Northcliffe) perpetrated a revolution in Fleet Street, it was essentially a commercial one. Perkin is sufficiently a realist to recognize that there has been no long-term decline. At the same time, he is sufficiently a moralist to lament that the performance of the popular press has "not progressed enough".

Himself "a middle-class intellectual of working-class origins", Perkin glories in the unpredictability of human character. Like Marx and certain prominent "sophisticated" Marxist scholars, he objects strenuously to those who engage in "theorizing about the working class" as a "substitute for objective study". Such people, whom Shaw dubbed "intellectual proletarians", sacrifice imagination and empathy to a mechanistic approach which implies "the consecration of posterity". A card-carrying member of the Society for the Study of Labour History, much as he might wish to change its name, Perkin condemns as official and misleading the sort of preconceived inquiry.

which treats the working class not as individual people to be understood for their own sake and categorized, where



This drawing of a London East-end male by Fred Barnard for George Sims's *How the Poor Live* (1883) is taken from *The Victorian Woodblock Illustrators* by Eric de Maré (200pp. Gordon Fraser. £29.50.)

this is necessary, into discriminate groups which they themselves would not recognize and understand, but rather as a monolithic block to be set against the opposing monolithic block of the capitalist bourgeoisie, the latter millstone to be ground against the upper in the theoretical mill of historical inevitability.

Marxist scholars by no means monopolize this tendency, from which the best of them are happily exempt. Rather, it may be diagnosed as the symptom of a residual Victorianism. The crowd dictates — and deserves — its own structure.

For his part, Perkin is more satisfied by those who strive to take account of elements of class collaboration, who draw vertical (and diagonal) dividing lines as well as the usual horizontal ones, and who have consequently produced a "more realistic and less manipulative approach to working-class history". Yet that remains a relatively small segment of the "ecology" with which he is concerned. According to his "cosmology" of 1953, social history is a "capacious . . . study", with an open-endedness that should give "joy to the profession" as a whole. If, over the years, he has modified his judgments and sharpened his style, he has ostentatiously retained his voracity. In the writing of history as in other social pursuits, "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's the subject for?" The subsequent range of Perkin's subjects has been as impressive as the strength of his grasp.

To a meeting of the Royal Historical Society in 1968, he spoke incisively on "The Social Causes of the Industrial Revolution", and ventured a broad analysis of material, moral, and even constitutional effects. To the students at the Scottish Universities' International Summer School, for whom he has presumably since prepared something else, he lectured in 1977 (and again in the two following years) on "Social Change and the Novel", placing an uncharacteristic emphasis on the creative value of class conflict. To a summer school on public planning, held at the University of York in 1973, he presented a paper on "Public Participation in Government Decision-Making", which shorted the evolution of the modern public inquiry. To an SSRC seminar, he cited the perils of "Social Forecasting": "One damn thing effects another"; and there are just too many "damn things".

On each of these occasions, Perkin necessarily took account of his audience's background and level of expertise. With

common sense, pungency, and a quality known to his American admirers as "feliness", he managed to elucidate without trivializing. The single exception, at least in the mind of this reviewer, is an address to a seminar at the Free University of Berlin in 1978. Posing the question "Who Runs Britain?", it takes up the "endlessly fascinating" topic of "Elites in British Society since 1880". Admittedly, "it is much easier to ask the question than to answer it", but Perkin's enumerated procedures — curiously reminiscent of the antiquarians' lists he once scorned — do not help. His conclusions are tentative and, notwithstanding an effort at quantification, generally inconclusive. In so far as he contrives to measure "the changing patterns of recruitment", his frames of reference are already dated. Least of all does he establish a correlation between élite status and the possession of influence. "Who governs Britain? The governing class, surely", Philip Toynbee reportedly declaimed at a symposium. Perkin, not for want of trying, does not carry us much further.

Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, his ambition commands respect. Robert Blake, in *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill* (1970), listened upon Perkin's thesis, adumbrated in an early essay and fully promulgated in *The Origins of Modern English Society* (1969), that the world's "first and only spontaneous industrial revolution" was a logical outgrowth of the prevailing social structure. "This is a difficult question", concluded Blake, who probably proceeded to make it in the particular case of Sir Robert Peel.

Difficult questions are Harold Perkin's stock-in-trade, and he does not shy away from the complexities they involve. Occasionally, as when he atones the "false antithesis" between nineteenth-century collectivism and individualism, the difficulty of the question is somewhat exaggerated to make a pedagogical point. More typically, as when he investigates the interplay between "Land Reform and Class Conflict in Victorian Britain", the result is brilliant. When he carries his well-formulated concept of "professionalization" from this essay into the expounding arena of university teaching, the affinities are striking. And the reflections of class-consciousness, which he discerns in the evolution of Victorian seaside resorts, are all the more telling for the familiar images they bring to mind. All in all, this is a baker's dozen of the highest nutritional value.

Wildest Wales

By S. P. Dance

WILLIAM MC CONDRAY
The Natural History of Wales
286pp. Collins. £5.50.
0 00 119368 2

Superficially this book resembles all the other regional volumes in the New Naturalist series, which Collins have been publishing since the 1940s, but read almost any one page of it and you recognize that the writing is of the common order. William Condray manages to convey accurate information and to do it with wit and wisdom. "As for Barry Island", he writes, "once described as 'gay with innumerable 'bee' circles"

Today it is one great holiday camp and the only species 'numerable' is *Homio sapientis*. Of the monkey-flower, a native of the Alicantine Islands introduced into the British Isles, he comments "It set our noses Abernethy and has been creeping shyly about ever since."

If he can substantiate a fact by personal observation, he does so. After telling us that there are no roses on Bardsey Island, for instance, he says, "I remember one landing on Bardsey and seeing a tall leap ashore and disappear into the bushes, as we unloaded our stores. But such was the island rule that we dropped everything and searched for that rat tail. It had been killed! Astonishingly he pays scant attention to the lower invertebrates and the entire world of marine biology, but at least the preface tells us why.

Just as the impressionistic cover design of sporting kites — the work of Clifford and Rosemary Ellis — should draw us into a bookshop so also should Condray's text draw us into Wales. The absence of coloured photographs which used to embellish these New Naturalist volumes in more expansive days is hardly noticeable; the prose is a more than adequate compensation. *The Natural History of Wales* was written from the heart — and it shows.

WILLIAM MC CONDRAY, 1240, Albany 17th

SECOND-CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY. PRICE: £5.50. SUBSCRIBERS US \$10.00. CASH ORDERS TO: COLLINS, 300 N. ZEEB ST., NEW YORK, NY 10017.

in the subsequent period of seizure and murder law. One is left with the feeling by what Dr. Tombs has to tell us that the "Lumpenproletariat" received its just deserts, but the picture of its interest in the Commune may be overdone. Of eleven odds discussed, seven were in the Guard, three as NCOs. What of those who both behaved critically during the Commune and escaped trial by the military? The police records have been destroyed, so we seem to have a one-sided view. The second hypothesis is equally problematical: pre-Lumpenproletariat "physiognomy" — views, derived from Lavater, were widespread in Europe by 1810; but to what extent were they still current in 1871? We also need more information relating to fighting, shootings and arrests in the various arrondissements of Paris in order to be able to draw proper conclusions about the Commune.

In an essay on witchcraft in Europe, Christina Larmer shifts attention from the popular level of belief and accusation in order to draw distinctions between popular and learned beliefs about witches. She suggests links between witchcraft and the judicial changes of the 1530s, involving the "criminalization" of women. Although the association of *maleficium* with women was a popular belief, it can also be seen as a convenient one at a time when the age of marriage among women, and the percentage of those who remained unmarried were both increasing. The need to "criminalize" women may have arisen because of greater proportion of them were then independent of men. This situation could be seen as both a symptom of economic malaise and as its reinforcement.

She demonstrates how the panic worked and its influence in bringing about a redefinition of the crime of Larceny from the Person to Robbery with Violence, but she does not link this with any "criminal class". She might have acknowledged that there were, in fact, four such panics between 1855 and 1876, and give some attention to Walter Crofton's 1861 definition of and campaign against a "criminal class". Once Crofton is acknowledged it is difficult to separate the idea of a criminal class from that of habitual offenders and the penalties which were attached to them in 1869.

A final essay on England, by Vic Gatrell, provides a 132-page examination of the decline in theft and violence between the 1840s and 1914. Gatrell gives us a reasoned account of the statistical trends, considering every objection (including a slump of public interest in reporting petty crime) in the context of increasing public confidence in a policed society. We badly need similar studies to this for continental Europe; such statistics as we have suggest that France and Germany saw no fall in their recorded crime rates before 1900-9, the point at which English rates began to climb, in circumstances of rising prices and economic depression. Was Europe not as thoroughly policed as England until this date?

In an essay on the "Dangerous Classes" in the Paris Commune, Tombs considers the opportunities for respectability afforded to old offenders by service in the "hygienic" National Guard, and the "physiognomic" image of the poor used as a measure of discrimination by the Army.

ter spread north from Italy to reach the Netherlands in the 1570s. The social and political roots of the decay of composition were seen to lie in both urbanization and its accompanying mobility, which made the majority of daily contacts anonymous, and the establishment of a successful state hegemony of supervision and violence. The essay ends with the apparent imposition of the codes penal, civil and their equivalents during the French Revolutionary Wars, and a consideration of a developed and generally punitive system of criminal justice in England, a country where urbanization and political stability were notably in advance of the rest of Europe.

The author is not right to end this essay at the point where the majority's experience of jurisdiction was about to change, but we should remember that the agent of supervision in rural France in the 1860s remained the *garde champêtre*, a local constable, not a *commissaire* or *gendarmerie*; police state, not a police state. There were still feuds between lords and vassals in the late nineteenth century. And even after the justification of the *code pénal* in 1832, in circumstances of comprehensive calm, there was no public trial, and still the South in the peripheral grip of the *latifundia* and their patrons. In the context of recent experience it is the violence we find striking rather than the complementary restorative elements in the regulation of society. There is more to be said about the continuance of composition in the disputes of rural Europe, parts of which effectively resisted state regulation until the present century.

That early modern society was often

By Simon Steyenson

V. A. C. GATRELL, BRUCE LEMMAN and GEOFFREY PARKER (Editors)
Crime and the Law
The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500
416pp. Europa. £20.
0 95118 54 5

A decade ago the optimistic expectation that innovative methods would enable us to delve into the archives to reveal patterns of behaviour wholly different from our own, due to the "interval" "labelling" theory under the New Criminology, have increased. However, doubts about these processes in urbanized society, which are especially considered in these nine essays, have not been much less. Unfortunately, the redefinition made (of feud continued) with recourse to law has been

It is in this area of extreme legal redress, which Bruce Lemman and Geoffrey Parker have taken the first essay on "The State, Community and Criminal Law in Early Modern Europe", which is a formidable survey of the law of homicide before 1800, that we reverse the direction. Dismissing the notion of "early modern" legal systems as a fiction, rather than a reality, they argue that the redefinition of justice for the ruling of ancient law, and the ruling of ancient law, as the law

In the direction of chaos

By T. P. Matheson

M. C. BRADBROOK:

John Webster—Citizen and Dramatist
218pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.
0 297 77813 7

JACQUELINE PEARSON:

Tragedy and Tragicomedy in the Plays of John Webster
151pp. Manchester University Press. £12.50.
0 7190 0786 0

T. S. Eliot identified the contradictions inherent in John Webster's four independently-written (as distinct from collaboratively-written) plays on the one hand, "a very great literary and dramatic genius directed toward chaos"; on the other, "a satisfying unity and significance of pattern... springing from the depth and coherence of a number of emotions and feelings, and not only from dramatic and poetic skill". Webster's directed chaos is pervasive, not just as a poetic metaphor but in the lives of his characters and in the theatrical spectacle. In the two most famous plays, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, all the ceremonies and institutions devised by society for its public order and dignity dissolve into what is represented as their private opposite: marriage dissolves into fornication and sexual disease; law into verbal incoherence and madness; civility into squalid and grotesque murder; religion into magic and conjuration; the parody of joy into the decay of the Charnel-house; even theatre itself becomes a series of tricks, like the masques and dumb-shows which torment and deride his characters.

M. C. Bradbrook and Jacqueline Pearson sign each in their respective studies to resolve these colliding opposites using

radically different methods of investigation; mutually exclusive in some respects, complementary in others. Professor Bradbrook has written about Webster before, notably in his *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1935; revised 1968). But for this latest book he is able to draw upon the biographical information first disclosed to the 7LS by Mary Edmond (October 24, 1976, March 11, 1977, and October 24, 1980). Webster is now firmly identified as the son of a wealthy coach-maker, located in West Smithfield in the parish of St Sepulchre-without-Newgate; marrying in haste the pregnant Sara Peniall (the sixteen-year-old daughter of a saddler), probably in March 1606; combining the career of playwright with the business of cartwright; admitted to the prosperous Merchant Taylors' Company by patrimony (as earlier his elder brother Edward had been admitted by indenture). His father's premises, at the corner of Cow Lane and Hosier Lane, were within a few minutes' walk of the Fortune and Red Bull theatres, almost within sight and sound of Newgate Prison and St Bartholomew's Hospital.

What the effect of this improved biographical knowledge might be upon our response to and interpretation of Webster's plays is hard to measure. Certainly, in confirming Webster's life and background as citizen and businessman, it could help to explain his bitter cynicism toward aristocratic values, his preoccupation with precise relationships within the hierarchy of Court or Household, the cash nexus which unites his characters in bonds of social, marital and personal contract, and in the rituals of patronage and bribery. This firmly materialist basis of relationships in his plays is acknowledged by both Bradbrook and Pearson, but is treated as merely the *ars moriendi* rather than the root of things, and is neglected in favour of other concerns. (More disconcerting is to find similarly neglected in L. C. Knights' *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson*, where Webster is relegated to only five fleeting allusions).

Webster the citizen does not inspire Professor Bradbrook to economic reflection. Instead, she attempts what is described as the "display" method, appropriate to the author of a triumphal city pageant, reconstructing Webster's world ("the context, not the content of his tragedies") by juxtaposing the lives of notable fellow parishioners with incidents, characters and attitudes from the plays. This produces an invigorating series of "perspectives" of the splendours and miseries of St Sepulchre (its bell tolling for every execution), but the results of the display, while vivid and suggestive, are difficult to verify or assess. After indirectly illuminating Webster's education and training via the biographies of Richard Mulcaster at Merchant Taylors' School and John Davies at the Middle Temple, Bradbrook explores possible local and contemporary analogues in life for the tragic victims (principally the Duchess) of Webster's plays. As she dramatically puts it: "all the passions of Renaissance Italy were to be found on his doorstep".

Next door to the Webster's coachyard lived Penelope, Lady Rich, sister of the Earl of Essex, Sidney's Stella, an unwilling wife for twenty-four years, who bore her lover, Essex's friend and rival Charles Blount, no less than five children. As Essex's fortunes declined in treason and death, Blount's (and Penelope's) seemed to rise. Blount was made a Counsellor to King James, Penelope a Lady of the Bedchamber (fifth in precedence). The lovers lived openly together until, after Rich had obtained a consistory divorce, they entered into a secret marriage, perhaps to guarantee the inheritance of their children. James forbade them the Court, secret marriage, secret procreation, royal disfavour, the coincidence of the two, impetuous, doomed brother—these do suggest the spirit if not the fact of *The Duchess of Malfi*. But the nub of the play's matter, marriage to a social inferior, is missing; as is any kind of substantive, demonstrable association.

Another ghostly model may be the Princess of Eboli, patroness and supposed mistress of Antonio Perez, the King of Spain's

hounded and exiled double-agent (who at one time maintained his household in Essex House in the Strand). For her association, Eboli was confined until death in a darkened, barred room; her estates were confiscated; guardianship of her children was withdrawn. Her resilience under imprisonment is revealed by her quipped defiant retort: "I love Antonio Perez's axe better than the King's face". The contingent circumstances—arbitrary imprisonment, ecclesiastical persecution, espionage, a view of the world as an impenetrable labyrinth—again suggest the Duchess, although Eboli's frustrated attempt to find refuge in a Carmelite monastery might also echo Vittoria's fate.

M. C. Bradbrook writes robustly and speculatively out of a rich knowledge of the period, although it is doubtful whether the demonstration that Webster probably exploited local as well as Italian colour is of "practical help in understanding the 'inner logic' of the plays themselves".

Jacqueline Pearson confines most of her analysis to her rather than life, treating the plays as virtually self-contained, self-defining literary and dramatic artefacts, which manipulate conventions of form and content within the putative genre of Jacobean tragedy. She argues that an obsessive consciousness of the "clashing extremes" of life provokes experiments in dramatic structure and tone which will embody significant contrasts and discontinuities. Thus, tragicomedy is variously exemplified in plays which mix kings and clowns, join myth with care; avert the danger of death; insist on the fictional nature of what is happening; offer a diversity of reaction to the same episode; exploit schematic antitheses (in both language and stage effects); dramatic "clashing tones" of laughter and tears. These "clashing tones" are central to her interpretation, to be seen in Webster's introduction of laughter at various moments, his discontinuous characterization, his ambivalence of attitude toward his own rhetoric, the establishment of distinctive play-audience relationships and the

use of a mediating conclusion (in the terms defined in Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*). The implication is that only a "mixed" genre can express the whole truth, and that ironic repetition (as in Webster's plays) is its chief instrument.

Dr Pearson presents her thesis with care and caution, marshalling evidence from an extensive range of contemporary plays, although with few European examples. Her necessary weight to *The Devil's Lane* and *A Cure for a Cuckold* as well as to the major tragedies. One common objection is to such a broad definition of tragicomedy, which will inevitably adjust to explain almost any kind of dramatic discontinuity in the interest of a higher principle. Pearson seems aware of the risk of rationalization in this and therefore reasonably relies as much on the citation of minute particulars as on the report of general principles in proposing (in the face of considerable traditional hostility) the unity and coherence of language, character, structure and spectacle in Webster's plays.

The argument that Webster sets up a special relationship between play and audience requires two kinds of suppression: more theoretical attention to the effect on criticism of the alternative theories of performance and text; and consideration of actual modern performances of Webster's plays, an element of stage history. In the same respect, Pearson's recurrent motif of simultaneous laughter and tears as a condition of Jacobean tragicomedy (exemplified in Macdonald's *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, where one page weeps to see the other laugh and the other laughs to see the first weep), almost finds its modern counterpart in the formulation of Brecht's *Epic Theatre*: "That's great art: there's nothing obvious in it. I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh." The difference is that, in Webster, detachment in the face of horror belongs to the characters; in Brecht such alienation is a function of the spectator.

PHILOSOPHY

BRUCE A. ACKERMAN:

Social Justice in the Liberal State
322pp. Yale University Press. \$17.50.
0 300 02439 8

This book is clearly in the tradition of John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Much of the discussion concerns a group of pioneers who are about to colonize a new planet, and science-fiction devices are used freely to set up the idealized situation for which social justice is initially described (though we move later towards really and second-best solutions). All material resources consist of a single infinitely alterable substance called "manna", and the (female) Commander is provided not only with rags-rags but with a "perfect technology of justice" with which to enforce whatever distributions, etc. are chosen as just: there is also a Master Genetist equipped with germ-bombs, and a Master Designer who makes "messenger-shielders" that facilitate or block communication.

Throughout most of the book Bruce Ackerman takes liberalism in some sense for granted. His problem is how to define the liberalism, and his main thesis is that he has found a better way of doing this than is yielded by either utilitarian or social contract approaches. But at the end he makes some suggestions about how this view may be supported against explicitly non-liberal political philosophies.

He has, indeed, an interesting new idea, that liberalism is to be defined in terms of *constrained dialogue*. He sees the basic problem as a natural and inevitable struggle for "power", under which head Ackerman includes all competition for scarce resources. He identifies the liberal solution as that which can be defended in dialogue, in conversation, between the competitors, subject to the three constraints of rationality, consistency, and

degree. But his arguments against this are unconvincing. He says that if such a consideration yields an unequal distribution, anyone who gets less than another can protest: "So the only thing that prevents me from getting the manna is the character of my ideals". Though this is literally true, it does not mean that part (a) of the neutrality constraint is violated. Though one claimant gets less because of what his ideals or purposes are, it is not because they (or his conception of the good) are being held to be inferior. Ackerman is here guilty of a blatant fallacy in the use of his own constraints.

His procedure is question-begging in another way. Even if we agreed (though we have not been forced to) that if the manna is to be divided among the competitors, it must be divided equally, some might ask why it should be divided at all, rather than kept together as a collective resource, particularly if this would fulfill the totality of purposes better. This issue, individualism versus collectivism, is discussed in Chapter Six, but only in terms of the opportunity for those who wish to pool their individual shares and form a commune to do so. This assumes, and does not argue on any neutral grounds, that there must be a *basic* distribution to individuals. But someone who opposed this and advocated collectivism would not be putting forward a particular conception of the good any more than someone who thought initially in terms of individual shares, as Ackerman does. If we thought first of joint ownership of all resources (as Locke, for example did), and saw its continuance as maximally efficient (as Locke did not), we might complain that those who demand their separate-shares are, for the sake of their particular conception of the good, diminishing the value of other people's shares.

Another question which agitates moralists concerns the usage of those whose claims or interests are to be taken into account. Do they include unborn babies, non-human animals, actual or possible members of future generations? Here Ackerman thinks that his method yields clear-cut answers. All and only those who can eventually enter into dialogue can make claims. With a few possible exceptions, non-human animals are not in the game, for are infants or fetuses, but actual future people are in, and perhaps talking apes and Martians who can learn English. These are (admitted answers, but are they the answers we want? If they do result from the stated constraints on dialogue, does this not merely show how arbitrary those constraints are? If someone objected that Ackerman's citizens, in denying rights to the various excluded creatures, are in effect claiming that they are superior to those who are excluded, he would not doubt reply that rationality is so defined that a power-holder can be challenged only to show that he is a more entitled person, or to see what force this other creature on whose behalf a questioner speaks. But why should rationality have been defined in just this way?

Rationality requires that any claim to "power" must be defended by the claimant giving a reason why he is more entitled to the resource than the questioner. But this reason cannot be an assumed antecedent right; any rights must emerge from the dialogue itself. Consistency is the rule that the reason advanced by a power-holder on one occasion must not be inconsistent with the reasons by which he defends other claims. The third and most important constraint, neutrality, says that "the reason is a good reason if it requires the power holder to assert: (a) that his conception of the good is better than that advanced by any of his fellow citizens, or (b) that, regardless of his conception of the good, he is intrinsically superior to one or more of his fellow citizens".

How does this differ from, for example, a utilitarian view, which also gives equal weight to everyone's interests? To answer this question, and to see what force this proposal has, let us examine some of Ackerman's applications of his method. One of these concerns the distribution of resources for the "piously stipulated" initial situation of the colonists (all adult and healthy), landing on an uninhabited planet. Ackerman argues that "only an equal distribution of manna" can be defended subject to his constraints, unless one or more individuals voluntarily ask for less than an equal share; but a voluntary request favours an unequal distribution if it is based on greater utility. Ackerman thus equalizes weight to persons, whereas utilitarianism gives equal weight to social preferences. His argument is that since one can think it better to be a disadvantaged Socrates than a happy, wealthy, well-off Aristotle, it is not a yardstick, but the particular conception of the good which others hold, and cannot be brought to bear in neutral dialogue. It would be wrong to say that this is a fallacy, but it is a fallacy to dismiss the utilitarian that identifies utility with the fulfillment of purposes. Though Ackerman does not discuss this, he might well object that an individual whose claims are to be defended against, not pursued, but who would be an additional source of conflict, would be a source of conflict. The fulfillment of purposes is not a neutral conception of the good, but the general form of any such conception.

Ackerman does discuss "supererogatory" actions, but he does not discuss the possibility that resources should be distributed so as to let each person have the goods to let each be the best person he can be. The same

Ackerman is against inherited wealth, and against parents being allowed to do almost anything to give their children a specially good start in life. As far as possible, all young adults are to start level. But there are two exceptions. If parents actually like their children, and are not merely responding to the parent-child relationship as such, they may do things for them, just as they are free to do things for other people, though what they do had better not take the form of "large material gifts". Also, if an adult has accumulated possessions which he has no obligation to pass on to anyone—they are surplus to the requirements of basic fairness between generations—he may bargain with those of the next generation whom he does not favour, so that if they receive smaller gifts from him they will not protest if he gives much more to his favoured offspring.

Does justice then depend more on hard bargaining than on neutral dialogue? This is obviously an untidy solution. But we can see why Ackerman is forced into such shifts. The dialogue he allows is extremely thin, constantly coming back to "I am at least as good as you are". If each claimant is as good as another, then like claims must be met equally. But what about *diverse* conflicting claims, such as the claim of a legitimate owner to do what he likes with his possessions—or, indeed, his energy—and the claim of all members of the next generation to a level start? Such rival claims must be balanced somehow, but dialogue as Ackerman constrains it will not tell us how.

A similar problem concerns the example of a man who hires his former wife's beyoned reason, and is liable to kill her if they meet. Ackerman makes it easier by assuming that the man lives in the east and the woman in the west, so that the only necessary restraint is that he be forbidden to go west even for a vacation. But what if she wants to come east, or to live in the east? Should he be locked up temporarily, or permanently, or must she either take the risk of meeting him or forgo the delights of New York? Neutral dialogue will not tell us just where to draw the line, and we would surely have to consider how far beyond reason his hatred is, whether she has in any way brought it on herself. Genuine disagreements and how to compensate for them raise a similar problem. The solution Ackerman indicates comes not from dialogue but, to effect, from an assumed right to (as far as possible) equal opportunities for the pursuit of happiness.

A moral and political problem of the future is genetic engineering. Ackerman considers a parent who has deliberately chosen to produce "a brown-eyed girl who is relatively good at chemistry but relatively weak on aesthetic sensibility". Having reached the age of twenty, the daughter, though good at chemistry, times old and asocial. Should he be allowed to do so? If it is doubtful whether the twenty-year-old asocial child his forty-year-old prodigal should be able to condemn his forty-year-old sadder and wiser self to permanent penury? But Ackerman shows no awareness of this sort of problem.

There is much of interest in many of Ackerman's detailed discussions. But whatever real work is done is to be ascribed not to dialogue but to the principle that "since everyone is, at least as good as everyone else (sic), no one can be called upon to sacrifice more of his ideal rights than anyone else". But an open working out of the implications of this principle would require an explicit formulation of some basic "ideal right". The dialogue theory purports to do without this, but it can get nowhere with the real problems of liberalism unless it helps itself surreptitiously to some such notion.

Near the end of the book, Ackerman sketches "philosophical conversation in defense of a liberal state", as contrasted with political dialogue within a liberal state, which has occupied most of the book. He mentions "four of the main highways to the liberal state" which are really four familiar arguments against any modern variant of Plato's rule by philosopher kings. First, especially since power itself corrupts, any such programme is likely to fall into the hands of people who are not aiming wisely at their subjects' wellbeing. Secondly, even if there is an objective good to be pursued, only continuing critical discussion gives any reason to believe that what passed for knowledge of it is even an approach to such knowledge. Thirdly, it may be argued that what is objectively good essentially involves autonomous choices, and therefore cannot be provided by a non-liberal government for its subjects. Fourthly, there is the sceptical view that there is no objective, knowable, good.

But though these are four arguments against uncontrolled philosopher kings, they are not alternative highways to the same kind of liberalism. In fact none of these supports part (a) of Ackerman's neutrality constraint. The first three allow that one person's conception of the good may really be superior to another's; if so, why should this possibility never be raised (not to be laid down dogmatically, but to be argued for) in political discussion? And the translation from the fourth, purely negative, sceptical thesis to the positive requirement of neutrality between ideals is just an all too common fallacy.

Indeed, Ackerman's case for liberalism is obscured by a basic lack of clarity about the status of values. Each citizen is supposed to say that his own "range of self-fulfilment has some value" and to "affirm the value" of it. These look like assertions of objective value, which would deny the sceptical thesis. Yet they are never taken seriously as such assertions, but are treated rather as expressions of demands that the citizens are making.

As a whole, then, this book is disappointing. It has a promising central idea, and it raises important issues. But much of the argument is thin, and some is fallacious. Anyone who remembers the classics of political philosophy will regret the style. We learn, for example, that "it is the length road that is relevant to a practical assessment of trusteeship commitments" (the liberal theory makes people pierce their substantive disagreements and achieve a deeper unity—the fact that they are all seeking to define themselves through a common process of dialogue), and we encounter "the conceptual task of providing a Neutral order to the struggle for power" and "ongoing good-faith disagreement". Indeed, the author's favourite words are "ongoing" and "dialogue"—a substitute for the standard English "dialectical". The text is also disfigured by many grammatical and other errors that are a disgrace to a university press. If a social work fulfilled the liberal theory, it would be a disaster for you and me" (p. 34); "Nor is it enough to criticize... but to show..." (p. 67); "waving a flag" (p. 73); this is not a joke; "his former wife, who he now hates" (p. 84); "fulfilled his burden" (p. 120); "just because... didn't mean" (p. 210); "work about the pliers" (p. 36); meaning "walk".

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Matt Simpson

Literature in brief

GERALD HAMMOND:

The Reader and Shakespeare's Young Men
Summes
247pp. Macmillan. £12.
0 333 28513 3

Big felines have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em; and commensals have commensals, and so ad infinitum. This book rides confidently on the back of Stephen Booth's voluminous commentary on Shakespeare's Sonnets (Yale 1977), adding little to it except the yobbish conception of "the reader". Gerald Hammond is concerned with what goes on between this concept and various layers of meaning in Sonnets 1-126, most often, a "subtext" rather than the primary sense.

The book is not without sensitivity and judgment. Mr Hammond takes Thorpe's text as containing "enough defensible ground" to justify keeping the 1609 edition, and to devote to treat 126 (not a sonnet), the conclusion to the "young man" sequence, which overall is the quest for immortality, concerns both the judgment of many readers. But his arguments or scholars really want to see commentary on the Sonnets, especially when it is neither informed nor coherent. Hammond approaches the Sonnets in a deliberately non-scholarly way, claiming that readers can develop satisfactory modes of reading "without their having to relate the poem to the entire culture in which it was written". Unfortunately, qualified analyses of individual words and phrases are unlikely to be satisfactory without some scholarly framework. Simple consultation of the OED would have delivered Mr Hammond from most of his "Shakespearean" "subtext". It was first used in this sense by Sidney in his revised *Arcadia*, and has been in continuous use since 1584.

KATHERINE DUNCAN-JONES:

The Great Tradition from Austen to Joyce
399pp. University of Chicago Press. £13.
0 226 07320 0

Robert M. Polhemus's *Comic Path* aims to do three things: to analyse comic novels from *Don Quixote* to *War and Peace*; to trace the links between "comic" and "serious" and religious concerns; and to show that comedy itself represents a kind of religious consciousness.

End L. Dutton:

The Thomas of Eborac
217pp. Macmillan. £12.
0 233 27831 8

End L. Dutton:

case, through individual works. After an admirable biographical sketch she devotes seven chapters to the examination of individual themes of Gaskell's novels, ovelles and short stories: the natural scene, the social scene, the industrial scene, the family, the individual, mystery and the macabre, and religion.

She shows the consistency, despite the variety of forms and subjects chosen, in Gaskell's treatment of these themes, even in her most disparate works: the use of the Arcadian colony setting (like Poussin's *Arcadia*), the incorporation of death as a place of spiritual refreshment and a source of moral strength; her seriousness and sensitivity in handling the social nuances which play so important a part in the lives of her characters, and her presentation of a strong family background however limited its numbers, as a source of moral strength; her concern for the difficult necessity of reconciling individual dignity and autonomy with the primacy of social and religious duty; and finally the overwhelming loving religious conviction, while being aware of the dangers inherent in a religion based on constraint and fear.

Dr Dutton also examines Gaskell's narrative method, showing the way in which her precise presentation of details provides some of her most powerful moments. Dutton is aware that the author's faults (although the final chapter, in which she confronts many of them, seems a little snatched) but her sympathetic and well-written reconsideration of the works makes this an important and stimulating study, and one which should serve, rightly, to raise further Mrs Gaskell's literary status.

JEAN WILSON:

Richard Cronin's *Shelley's Poetic Thought*
283pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 30009 2

Richard Cronin groups previous Shelley criticism into three broad categories: first, that which attempts to find a coherent view of Shelley as a thinker; second, that which sees Shelley as a great symbolist and myth-maker; and third, that which explores his political, religious, and philosophical life and his self-image. His poetry, his own approach is more linguistic and historical than that of any of the critics in these three groups. He takes as his starting point Coleridge's distinction between "poetic thought" and "thought" and translates into the language of poetry and thought the "poetic thought" of older, and the "thought" of newer, criticism. He is particularly good on Shelley. He then

It succeeds best at its first task. When scrutinizing individual novels, Robert Polhemus can be exhaustingly perceptive; and his book is full of thought-provoking paragraphs such as the brisk, idea-packed account of Meredith's style and what it signifies. Over-inventive is a constant danger, though. Leaping excitedly from one association to the next, his readings can leave readers gasping far behind as when he claims the *Gates in Through the Looking-Glass* as a reminder of Psalm 67 ("In the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice") and an embodiment of Carroll's awareness that he is "an inverted creature whose passion and inner drives can be symbolized by the word locust, serving as a cover for the word 'locust'".

The book's religious thesis tries hard to combine its various concerns, but is taped together with imagery rather than speedily secured by argument. Pearson's "spiritual Meredith in the communion of faith", Alice is "like a child, a source of our fearful hearts", and so on. Mr Polhemus's real intelligence, however, keeps breaking through this pseudo-mysticism. By so appreciatively bringing out the rich diversity of English comic fiction, he redemptively sabotages the mythic uniformity of his thesis.

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offers a detailed reading of all Shelley's major poetry, and shows that the ideas of the poems are inseparable from the language in which they are framed. He also makes helpful historical allusions and comparisons, so that for instance, *Adonais* is not merely explored in terms of parody and poetic mechanics but related interestingly to traditions of elegy going back to Spenser; and to eighteenth-century neoclassical moralists, such as Canova's monument to Maria Christina.

Mr Cronin's reading of the *Ode to the West Wind* is itself full of common sense, and the book as a whole is written in an inclusive comprehensible style. It would be safe to put it into the hands of an undergraduate student of conversation about Shelley.

A.N. WILSON

RUPERT HART-DAVIS (Editor):

The Lyttelton Hart-Davis Letters
Volume 3, 1958.
185pp. John Murray. £12.50.
0 7195 3770 3

1958 sees our two correspondents well entrenched in their hebdomadal habits, indulging themselves (in Burke's words used as an epigraph) "in the freedom of epistolary intercourse... with very little attention to formal method". George Lyttelton is busy in his rural retirement, marking COE and governing local schools, and finding time for some solid and systematic re-reading of *The Dynamics* for example, which (like the literary sensibility that used to rectify *Pompeii*) is a source of chorus when pumping out a flooded cellar, and immediately trying to mind "offering unneeded arms" performing dull faces of "stupid" (from Clough's *Bohemia*) when being visited to his feet after a fall on an icy pavement in Ipswich.

Rupert Hart-Davis is as busy as ever, much of his publishing time during the year being taken up with his aunt Lady Diana Cooper's *Memoirs*. His energy continues to diminish—the imminent death of *Time and Tide* may bring to an end his "year's" crime fiction review-work on the *Windsor* letters "take eating in bed but still to be 'gladly' picked up

when the press of business allows. For his extensive reading is something to be looked forward to. "I should love to read," he writes, "partly pleased and partly weary. I keep taking down unread books from my own shelves, reading a chapter or two with immense pleasure, and then having to put them back as 'unreadable'." His beloved Swinburne provides the only opportunity for prolonged "staid" where he had the assistance of a lady companion about whom—after some previous minor prevarication—he gives his friend some "private and revealing" information, frankly but sensitively conveyed.

The correspondents have the dissent of the Literary Society as an opportunity for meeting each other, where their fellow members included T. S. Eliot, "a bit of natural, humorous and unpretentious" and "Flash Harry" (Sir Malcolm Sargent), whose charms were more obvious but more debatable. In their letters, they are united in taste, though their preferences are now so mutually obvious that there is no grumbling about the usual bogey, "Your Duff is clearly marked out for a literary" Lyttelton writes about his friend's elder son: "Don't let him go with Amis, Leavis, Hobs or anyone called Wilson". Much more interesting, such as Rupert Hart-Davis's first visit to Stephen Sassoon, for whom he was soon to take yet another literary excursion.

The *Etonian* and *Chichester* columns have, as the editor remarks, been most reduced for this volume. But perhaps the most interesting feature is a list of the correspondents' special interests. When the London Library is still open, Lyttelton is busy in his rural retirement, marking COE and governing local schools, and finding time for some solid and systematic re-reading of *The Dynamics* for example, which (like the literary sensibility that used to rectify *Pompeii*) is a source of chorus when pumping out a flooded cellar, and immediately trying to mind "offering unneeded arms" performing dull faces of "stupid" (from Clough's *Bohemia*) when being visited to his feet after a fall on an icy pavement in Ipswich.

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ALAN BELL

The Ghost of my Mother

What of her history when all the traces of him — his hairs brushed in the nose, his excremental wax (that ologs my ears, I shall say) for you and me" (p. 34); "Nor is it enough to criticize... but to show..." (p. 67); "waving a flag" (p. 73); this is not a joke; "his former wife, who he now hates" (p. 84); "fulfilled his burden" (p. 120); "just because... didn't mean" (p. 210); "work about the pliers" (p. 36); meaning "walk".

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Matt Simpson

A sufficient nationalism

By Vivian Mercier

PATRICK RAFFOLDI
Irish Literature in English
The Romantic Period (1789-1850)
Volume 1, Parts 1, 2 and 3, 364pp.
Volume 2, Part 4, 392pp.
Cernads Cross: Colin Smythe.
£32.50 the set.
0 901072 40 0

Patrick Raffoldi, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lille, has done more to foster Irish studies in general and the study of Anglo-Irish literature in particular than any other living Frenchman. He is also expert in, among other things, English Romantic poetry. I wonder, though, how well he knows his Balzac: he seems to have forgotten the passage in *Le bal des perches* where Lousteau asks Lucien de Rubempré, "Are you a Classic or a Romantic?" and goes on to explain the literary politics of the Bourbon Restoration.

The Royalists are Romantics, the Liberals are Classicists... By an odd irony, the Romantic Royalists demand literary liberty and the repeal of the laws... whereas the Liberals want to preserve the United Kingdom, and the stability movement of the *ulster*. It follows that in each camp the literary beliefs are out of keeping with the political ones.

Unmindful of this paradox and despite a caveat or two of his own, Professor Raffoldi all too often equates Irish nationalism (preferably Catholic) with Romanticism, and Irish conservatism (preferably Protestant) with Neo-Classicism: he thus has difficulty explaining why *Melmoth the Wanderer*, perhaps the most unequivocally Romantic novel written in Ireland, was the work of a Church of Ireland clergyman with Evangelical leanings, author of *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church*. Most of the Reverend C. R. Maturin's Evangelical colleagues mistreated or despised novels except as channels for their own propaganda, like those of the Reverend George Brittain; like those of Professor Raffoldi his read *pour ses péchés*. Yet clergyman of this stamp were full of Romantic fervour, which they poured out in their sermons and in hymns that are still cherished. Unfortunately, two of the

hymn-writers, Reverends Thomas Kelly and John Walker, strayed from the Anglican fold to found epigrammatic sects, popularly known as the Walkerites and the Kellyites; if I may be permitted an Irish bit, the Plymouth Brethren were also founded in Dublin, so that Professor Raffoldi's remark about the "coldness" of Protestant "religious attitudes" requires modification, at least in regard to the period 1789-1850.

Although its English title suggests that *Irish Literature in English: The Romantic Period (1789-1850)* is a literary history, it is a long, stimulating essay in comparative literature, with a decidedly French orientation, first published in French under the more appropriate title *L'Irlande et le Romantisme* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1972). Professor Raffoldi has not revised his original text, which has been translated by Lucille Watson and Margaret Stanley Vaughan of Ottawa University; they have made a few serious errors; the worst implies that the Battle of Camperdown took place on land, *Irish land!* Calling a Catholic priest's house "the manse" is merely amusing. The essay fills the first volume of the English edition, while the second contains the "Reference Section" - that extraordinarily valuable feature of the French original which I, and no doubt many others, have pored over and pilloled since 1972. It consists of four parts: a general bibliography; bio-bibliographies of some 235 Irish authors; a list of the principal French translations of their works; and a very useful list of the principal Irish periodicals of the time. At least nine of the bibliographies of major authors have been updated by experts, mainly former pupils of Professor Raffoldi who have already made significant contributions to Anglo-Irish studies. My only criticism is that the bibliography could have been condensed into half the space by using a less extravagant format than the French one, thus substantially reducing the price of the work.

Professor Raffoldi's comparative approach is most evident in the first and third parts of his three-part essay. Part I, "Prelude to Romanticism", mentions the impact on Anglo-Irish intellectuals of Rousseau and the French Revolution, Goethe, Schiller, Kotzebue, Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, and of course the English Romantic poets. To Professor Raffoldi's

humorous dismay, Béranger was a favourite of the Reverend Francis Mahony ("Father Proud"), but such misvaluations are a constant hazard in inter-cultural traffic: as for example, the French cult of Poe's poetry, especially "The Raven". When they come to Part III, "The Impact of Irish Romanticism", Irish readers are going to feel a like dismay: not so much at the French enthusiasm for Tom Moore and Melmoth and Maria Edgeworth, as at the similar craze for Lady Morgan and the forgotten Mrs (Rogina Maria Dalton) Roche; until I read Raffoldi, I thought Mrs Roche's *Children of the Abbey* was a translation from the French - as at least one English edition, perhaps the one my mother owned, in fact was. It's gratifying, however, to find that more novels by John and Michael Banim appeared in French than the average Anglo-Irish specialist can remember the names of. Professor Raffoldi speculates that Irish humour either baffled or disgusted the translators, so that Lover and Lever are virtually ignored, and William Carleton too, though with less reason. It is possible, though, that Carleton's exclusively Dublin publication prior to 1847 explains this neglect: he first appears in French in 1845. As for the total oblivion that is James Clarence Mangan's fate in France, that can only be made comprehensible by his lack of a London publisher or magazine editor: otherwise a poet so closely resembling Poe would have swept through Paris like wildfire.

Part II, "Nationalist Romanticism", is of course the heart of Professor Raffoldi's essay; I have already indicated that he is more often right than wrong. After a chapter neatly summarizing the political events of 1782-1850 in Ireland, he turns to "The Romanticism [Romantisme] of the Nation's Present" - showing, for example, the difference in feeling between an Edgeworth landscape passage and the description of a similar scene by Lady Morgan; he also contrasts the two ladies' attitudes to characters drawn from the old Catholic aristocracy. He deplores much of Melmoth's work, but clearly she belongs to the nineteenth century, while Miss Edgeworth is a survivor from the eighteenth; in discussing the United Irishmen, who tried to transplant the French Revolution to Ireland, Professor Raffoldi concedes that "nationalism does not yet suffice" to warn Robert Emmet "from a traditional [verse] style with its

love of parallels or antitheses", but he fails to see an almost equal rigidity in William Drennan's "The Wake of William Orr". Even Moore, in the full flow of his sympathy for the dead Emmet and his bereaved fiancée, Sarah Curran, cannot resist a too-neat antithesis: "He had lived for his love, for his country he died...". On the other hand, the first Viscount Charleville, one of those rewarded for his part in passing the Act of Union which quashed the United Irishmen's hopes, built himself a battlemented castle "to exhibit specimens of Gothic architecture, as collected from Cathedrals and Chapels, and to show how they may be applied to Chimney Poles, Ceilings, windows, balustrades, etc.". The antiquarian element in Romanticism found a warm spot in Tory hearts, as the example of Walter Scott reminds us. In his generally impeccable chapter "The Rediscovery of the Past, the Irish Mode", Professor Raffoldi misses some nuances, such as the fact that the Irish Archaeological Society was founded in 1840 by a Tory High Churchman, Reverend James Henthorn Todd. He recognizes the importance of Carleton's knowledge of Irish, but is not aware that Eugene O'Curry was convinced of Gerald Griffin's literacy in that language by the completeness of the version of "The Children of Lir" given in *Tales of the Jury-Room*. Professor Raffoldi rightly stresses the revival of Irish music and the effect that writing to Irish tunes had upon the versification of Moore, hoping to create what Thomas MacDonagh, the 1916 leader, christened "The Irish Mode".

Perhaps the Irish past would never have been brought to life for readers of English if Romanticism had not developed when and how it did. Macpherson's *Ossian* was a Neo-Classicalist's conception of what "primitive" poetry ought to be like - be it said - but indeed Romanticism went wild over it; Irishmen suddenly realized the value, in cash as well as culture, of their Celtic heritage. Professor Raffoldi quotes the naïve but heartfelt words of Thomas Furlong, a bad poet: "Irish literature is no longer unfashionable; the demand increases, and the supply is certain". Furlong was one of the voracious who misappropriated the fine Irish texts in James Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy* (1831) by dressing up literary translations supplied to him by Hardiman. A young Tory, Samuel Ferguson, accused them of being "actuated by a morbid desire, neither healthy nor honest,

to elevate the tone of the original...". It is a enormous four-part review of translations of nearly thirty poems; better still, it includes an appendix containing twenty beautiful simple, almost naïve, translations, some of which had already become Anglo-Irish classics. Born in 1814, Ferguson belonged to a younger generation than Hardiman's, a poetaster and a plagiarist, but not without wit and wit, his *Dublin University Magazine* was the Irish equivalent of the first volume of Victor Hugo's *Œuvres*, marking a Romantic watershed.

In his final chapter, Professor Raffoldi passes judgement on Irish Romanticism, approving it severely for its sense of the past, its special pleading, artistic licence, and a lack of professionalising generally. Mangan he regards as the greatest poet: "About a quarter of Mangan's total poetic output may be safely compared to Coleridge's slender production verse. But how can one forget the remainder with its verbally, its reduplication, padding and the verbal acrobatics...". Moore and Ferguson and, among the unjustly neglected, he thinks, these Irish poets, Carleton and Le Fanu, are the most important figures in the Irish literary scene. As Volume II shows, Le Fanu's available complete in fifty-two volumes from an American reprint house and Professor Robert Le Wolf has another reprint, edited by Carleton in another reprint series. The Oxford Standard Authors edition of Moore's poems is long out of print, still we have never had comparable editions of Mangan and Ferguson and all, Professor Raffoldi's long bibliography of Mangan's magazine pieces suggests the difficulty of confronting an editor, but Jacques Chénier is soon to publish a definitive bibliography; the logical next step is a definitive edition. At the moment there is not even good Mangan selection in print, but Professor Raffoldi asks rather plaintively, "How many times will he have to be discovered?" If the present book does nothing more than convince English and American scholarly publishers of the importance of Mangan, that would be a notable achievement; but obviously it is destined to a long, useful life as a work of reference. Better still, it challenges every student of Anglo-Irish literature to view the subject in the context of world literature.

Posing on four legs

By Graham Reynolds

JUDY EGERTON
British Sporting and Animal Paintings
1665-1867
JUDY EGERTON and DUDLEY SNELGROVE
British Sporting and Animal Drawings
1500-1800
The Gallery for the Yale Center for British Art, £20 the set.

ANTHONY VANDERVELL AND CHARLES COLES
Game and the English Landscape
The Influence of the Chase on Sporting Art and Scenery
1500, Dehret's Peerage Ltd. £14.95.
0 305649 32 X

Robert Burton counted it among the misdeeds of scholars that "because they cannot ride a horse, which every clown can do... they are laughed to scorn, and accounted silly tools by our gallants". For three centuries the meloche and untheistic students of art have exacted their revenge for this disdainful laughter. They have drawn a rigid distinction between "paintings" and "sporting paintings", and refused to consider the latter worthy of study. Dr Waagen, suddenly taking notes of British collection in the mid-nineteenth century, ignored all sporting paintings except a few by Stubbs and the Woottons at Longleas. Collector Douglas, eighth Duke of Hamilton, who had an "unconquerable taste for every kind of horse", nonetheless hung his favourite paintings of animals in his private rooms while the state apartments of Hamilton Palace were embellished by Old Masters.

In forming his remarkably comprehensive collection of British painting, Paul Mellon has included some 400 sporting and animal pictures among 1700 paintings, whilst about a third of his 6,500 drawings have sport and animals as their subject; these works are listed, discussed and amply reproduced in two catalogues published by the Tate Gallery for the Yale Center for British Art. The *British Sporting and Animal Paintings* shows once again that enthusiastic and enlightened collecting is itself a creative form of scholarship. The collection and these catalogues support to the most effective way Mr Mellon's own belief that "British sporting art has always, blindly and mistakenly, been grossly underrated."

Since so much original research into the history of art has now been published in catalogues it is essential that the entries should convey information in a literate and readable form. Judy Egerton has triumphantly fulfilled her obligations in this regard. All too often art catalogues recall O's description of the conventional Bible, "let us pepper [the text] over with italics and numerals, print it in double columns, with a marginal gutter on either side, each gutter pouring down an inky flow of references and cross references", the main difference being that the references, in small print, are generally

ranged underneath the entry or, worse, placed at the back of the book where they can hardly be located. Mrs Egerton, in contrast, has arranged her discussion of each painting in the collection as a piece of compact, urbane prose which can be read with uninterrupted enjoyment. In doing so she has not fallen into the other bad habit of failing to acknowledge earlier contributions to knowledge. Perhaps her success in weaving references to other writers and previous writings into a connected and graceful narrative will serve future cataloguers as an example to be emulated.

Horace Walpole introduced his description of his collection at Strawberry Hill with the remark "Well-attested descent is the genealogy of the objects of virtù - not so noble as those of the people, but on a par with those of race-horses." Paul Mellon's collection of sporting pictures gives the happy opportunity of reviewing all three types of pedigree in the same context: that of the noblemen who bought the works, the provenance of the paintings, and of the race-horses who are so often their subject. The third is ground not often traversed by art-historians; but he may well feel that a genealogy such as that quoted by Egerton of the romantically named Flying Childers "got by the Darley Arabian out of Betty Leedes, by Careless out of sister to Leedes, by the Leedes Arabian" is more interesting than many he is familiar with in Lugt or Debreit.

She has a keen eye for anecdote. The prevalence of melancholy among the British upper classes was ascribed by Burrow to their idleness, alleviated only by an immoderate addiction to sport. It would be tempting to suppose that the need to check despondency by hard exercise is the reason why hunting, the turf and other sports have

produced such a rich crop of eccentrics. The tone is set by Tregonwell Frampkin, "father of the turf", woman-hater, pimp, inveterate gambler, seen in Wootton's "George I at Newmarket" wearing the drab, uncouth dress in which he even appeared at Court. Or there is the fourth Earl of Queensberry, "Old O", who, when he was his bet that a four-horse chase could travel at more than nineteen miles an hour, got James Seymour to paint the subject. Another epoch-making picture is seen in Abraham Cooper's "Elis at Doncaster". This is the original horse-van, invented by Dismal's hero, Lord George Bening. In view of his reputation for sports on the turf it comes as a surprise to learn that this van was designed to transport Elis from Goodwood to Doncaster on an unboard of speed so that Bening, who had spread the false rumour that his horse would be a non-runner, could make huge winnings on his success.

Egerton knows that "sporting artists, well aware of class distinction and the apparently common ground of the necessary use of the hunting field, conveyed their by subtleties of attitude and to a great extent, she exemplifies this by Fenwick's "Thames Wilkinton, M.F.H., with the Hurworth hounds", in which the social strata occupied by the Master, the gentleman huntsman and the hunt servants are nicely discriminated. It is surprising therefore that she should accept without question the purely hypothetical identification of the figures in J. R. Widdem's painting as "J. M. W. Turner and Walter Fawkes at Farnley Hall". By her own laws, the dapper top-hatted figure in the centre of the stage must be the owner of the hall, not a visiting artist, and the less prominent, funnel-clothed countryman a servant of the chase.

This is an untypical lapse and is more than

compensated for by the lengthy and exciting detective work which leads to the re-identification in John Zephaniah Bell of the double portrait of John Gubbins Newton with his sister Mary. This painting, hitherto attributed to J. L. Agnew, is one of the most fascinating and at the same time one of the most puzzling in the Mellon collection. In it the two children, a horse and a dog are presented in a state of sulky stupefaction. Bell won a prize in the 1843 competition for cartoons for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament. If this enigmatic double portrait is correctly added to his oeuvre - and the reasons given here for the attribution are persuasive - he can be seen to be unusual amongst British painters in the amount he absorbed from his early mentors, Baron Gros and the Nazarenes.

Since the Mellon collection was formed to satisfy an individual taste rather than demonstrate a thesis it contains many agreeable surprises in the work of the minor painters. These include Stephen Slaughter's appealing portrait of William Quin and his dog, William Shiel's susterly Scottish group discussing their salmon catch, and James Dunthorne's naïf rendering of the episode when John Sladey's hounds chased a fox over the roof of a farmhouse at Hadley. More generally, the collection enables us to trace the evolution of British animal painting from Wootton, who paints horses as Kneeller might have done - in periwigs, as he was - to its supreme peak in Stubbs. As Basil Taylor has helped us to recognize, Stubbs was not just a painter of animals, but a poet with a vision which transcended its subject-matter. Judy Egerton, who gives a comprehensive account of the Lion and Horse theme which was his most remarkable romantic image, rightly says that his most remarkable painting on a subject relating to the sport is the "Rubbing-down house at Newmarket", which is without animals or people.

Though he is more limited in imagination, Benjamin Marshall never ceases to astonish by the sharpness of his light and the luminosity of his technique. He shows us incisively a sense of character in his "Three Worthies of the Turf at Newmarket" that it is sad to read that he found "no man who will pay me fifty guineas for painting his horse, who thinks ten guineas too much for painting his wife". Yet without such patronage Agnew, a compulsive animal painter,

would not have been attracted to England where his Genevieve birthplace, nor James Ward encouraged to express such emotions of horse. The most apt comment on this field of taste is provided by Sawrey Gilpin's paintings of Lemuel Gulliver in the land of the Houyhnhnms: after so much equine nobility man seems a poor forked Yahoo indeed.

The cataloguing in the companion volume devoted to drawings is more summary, but contains plenty of material of parallel interest. Whilst a painter is frequently concerned with the more static or monumental aspects of sport, the draughtsman can capture instantaneous or fleeting moments of action. We are told that British sporting painters are not brutal; but numerous drawings of "The Death" leave us in no doubt that those were certainly blood sports. It was also easier for draughtsmen to produce a linked series of images showing the progress of a hunt. Samuel Howitt developed the concept of a series of hunting or shooting drawings, and his example was followed by Henry Alken and James Pollard. When these series of sporting scenes were engraved their popularity extended far beyond the British Isles to bring a touch of dandyism to the walls of many a French house or American club.

Sprinting prints and paintings form most of the evidence for the thesis put forward in Anthony Vandervell and Charles Coles's *Game and the English Landscape*, that hunting and shooting have had a profound and beneficial effect on the appearance of the countryside. The authors show that the features which make the land so suitable for fox-hunting or pheasant shooting are of relatively recent development. Enclosure, an essential preliminary to the creation of the patchwork of hedged fields and the corresponding balance of woodland and open land which provides cover for vermin and game alike. To the clear signs that the environment is rapidly deteriorating, even for this specialized purpose, the authors oppose a note of cautious optimism. They put their faith in the hunting farmer who should in his own interests preserve hedges, avoid barbed wire and noxious chemical sprays, and keep a proper balance between field and coppice. We can only hope that a renewed landscape, created for the sportsman, will encourage to refresh the contemplative visitor.



Glasgow style

By David Walker

ROBERT MCKINNON
Charles Mackintosh
The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs
224 pp. Unnumbered black-and-white illustrations. 26 colour plates. "Lutterworth Press", £30. 0 7188 2476 4

The generously proportioned volume is yet another product of the great analytical publishing industry centred on the University of Glasgow's Mackintosh and Whitley Collection, initiated and inspired by its first Professor of Fine Art, the late Andrew Mackintosh. It complements the same volume, *Charles Mackintosh: Watercolours* (1978), which, like the present one, was edited by the late Mackintosh's son, John Mackintosh, and published by the same publisher, Lutterworth Press, in 1977, which was necessarily

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textile designs which formed a major element of his interior practice, an undertaking made possible by the survival of many of his drawings and - hardly less fortunate - the job books of "Hodgeman, Keppie and Mackintosh" which are unusually detailed, itemizing even the smallest pieces of furniture. The vast majority of their entries have been identified and related either to the actual pieces or to old photographs to a degree which can only be described as astonishingly definitive. The interiors at Craigknave, Glasgow, of 1893 and 1897 and the great systems of metaphysics which generate and reinforce that meaning must thus stand as a model for any civilised design seeks to succeed. New Criticism, Leitch's argument of this case, is a few concessions to readers who are not prepared to grapple with the difficult and highly theoretical concepts on which his analysis rests. His style can be dense and even as well as witty and deft. Not all will agree with the career he examines are exemplary of anything other than the private aesthetic of a few men, whose taste of history seems open to many of the charges laid against the late Mackintosh.

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From hot to cold

By John Dreyfus

RUARI MCLEAN: RUARI MCLEAN
The Thames and Hudson Manual of Typography
216 pp. 188 illustrations. Thames and Hudson, £8.95 (paperback), £4.95.
0 500 87022 6

Experiences counts in writing a manual on a subject as broad as typography - defined in this work as "the art, or skill, of designing communication by means of the printed word" and therefore an involving the design of books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, leaflets, posters, advertisements, tickets, in fact anything that is printed and communicated to other people by means of words.

Ruari McLean (first studied the subject in 1936 at the Shakespear Head Press, where his mentor was Bernard Newdigate, a typographer with a strong prejudice against mechanical typesetting, and where one of the hand presses had belonged to William Morris).

In his own career, Ruari McLean has combined wide practical experience of design for printing with a fair amount of writing and editing; and he has worked during the period of transition from typesetting to filmsetting. One of the merits of his manual (written for a series of new, covers a range of craft) is that it deals with the new typographical techniques which have steadily replaced the old, but he has not during the past quarter of a century. But he has not been diverted by technological change from (letting a commonsensical approach to the recurring basic problems of typographical design).

His style is brisk and direct. Writing about basic problems, he writes that "legibility" is a dangerous word - and interpreting "word" is dangerous because it is so often used

as if it had a definitive or absolute meaning, which it does not have. It is a personal word, neither scientific nor precise. If you say 'this is legible', you only mean that you can read it; you do not know whether I can." He does not have a great respect for a great deal of legibility research concerned with straightforward reading matter for literate adults, but he nevertheless recognizes the need for research of one kind or another before almost any typographical problem is tackled. It is indicative of his approach that in his section on newspaper and magazine typography he carefully lists eight important questions that a designer needs to ask before designing a periodical.

Mr McLean can speak from experience on matters other than book design. He has previously written a book on magazine design and has been typographical adviser to the *Observer*. (He has also served as honorary typographical adviser to Her Majesty's Stationery Office). Nevertheless, book designers will find a great deal to interest them in this manual which covers their subject both historically and with practical advice. The illustrations include a generous showing of work by Jon Tschold for Penguin Books and others, and by the American type and book-designer, W. A. Dwiggins, whose work is little known to the UK.

In one respect the production of this manual falls short of its author's precept. One of his three rules for legibility is that "words should be set close to each other (about as far apart as the width of the letter 'm') and that 'continuous text' should be set with close and regular spacing between words, not irregular and wide spacing that calls attention to itself and is an obstacle to smooth reading". On many pages of this manual, there are lines in which a letter the width of an "m" could hardly have been placed in the gaps between words. The only other "disappointing" feature is the sparse, two-page index.

The anti-historical virus

By Terence Hawkes

FRANK LENTRICCHIA
After the New Criticism
384 pp. Athlone Press, £14.50.
0 485 11208 6

Frank Lentricchia's commitment to history constitutes the crucial challenge of his book. Even if this proposes a notion of temporal sequence, considerably at odds with the good deal of conventional critical wisdom. To most of its practitioners New Criticism appears hot as New, but as Criticism itself. And that is a condition which precludes authentic subsequentness. Beyond lies only the defuge.

For those who have judged the latter state to be already upon us, Professor Lentricchia's pending study could do much to stiffen the always and dumpon on the blood. For his mood is one of detailed, analytic, exposition, and its effect that of unfolding by daylight a motley, map of an area previously stumbled across in the dark. It liberates.

Much of this effort derives from the book's sense of the continuing formative pressure at work in society's processing of literature and criticism. There can be no criticism *ex nihilo*. New Criticism (let us say) is an aspect of Criticism *in situ*, its dominance decided by the force of an onslaught initiated by the publication in 1937 of Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. The critical nationalism of the two following decades, "the highest and most confident in critical history", form the subject of the first part of the book.

As Lentricchia points out, Frye's account of literature as a self-contained and self-sufficient structure, with its own requirements and imperatives, effectively

undermined the notion of an originating individual voice, audible within each work, which much New Criticism, told implicitly to valorize, but Frye, remains, for all that, an idealist: one whose sense of discourse as ultimately metaphorical in nature, with no direct bearing on or relation to the concrete existence, springs from a despising and alienated view of actual historical life.

Lentricchia nominates that alienation as the source of the formalism and idealism lurking undetected at the heart of much subsequent critical theory. His sustained articulation of it provides a fruitful purchase on a subject not always easy to pursue, and it enables him to chart persuasively the ebb and flow of concurring forces over a notoriously muddy battlefield.

Thus, although Roland Barthes never hesitates to stress the arbitrariness of any semantic system's relation to reality, too important of his contribution is seen to lie in his vivid awareness of the extent to which those relations are underwritten and "naturalized" by political and economic forces. When structuralism comes to be domesticated for the American and British markets, the same forces, radically, govern the mediating process. So, in its Anglo-American guise, structuralism tends to pursue "natural" and "autonomous" commodities such as "poetry", "fiction" and "human nature". But structuralism, "naturally" enough, manifests a similar degree of anti-historical bias, in many of its attempts to present, in an untroubled, self-sufficient discourse, the history of the differentiations of time and culture that are effectively lost.

Hence, although Derrida's deconstruction of the "metaphysics of the text" and his denial of any final "presence" setting off the work of the sign, is capable of genuinely subverting the man-made "naturalization" of the

appropriation of him has merely generated a large army of harmless sorcerer's apprentices. For most of them, Lentricchia concludes, the new-found freedom of "free play" yields only the rise of *ad hoc* or home-grown (and, politically, reinforced) idealism. Their refusal to credit the historical dimension of discourse results in a kind of magic incantation involving equally arbitrary, equally available interpretations of texts that are seen as finally and radically indeterminable: New Criticism, in short, with knots on.

In illustration of this general argument, the book's second part offers a striking account of four "exemplary" American critical careers. Murry Kriger emerges as a romantic "isolationist" for whom the uniqueness of the aesthetic experience is unchallenged even by its national status. E.D. Hirsch's insistence upon the author's authority in uttering (or "uttering") meaning leads him to a fundamentally anti-historical position whereby any text is "frozen" for all time (and out of all time) by the act of his author's eye.

Paul de Man's "exemplary" part is disheartening in support of the view that his critical post-structuralist position has its roots more in Sartre than in Derrida. De Man's preference for allegory over symbol, his "natural" connection between the signifier and signified, traditionally dismissed as "historical", allegory in effect, and as, consequently, the language of self-referential discourse. Symbol, by contrast, implies itself in *metaphoric* play (the use of the implicit claim to "an immediate, unmediated, one of being, fusing symbol and symbolized; properly understood, allegory offers a model of

the signifier's relation to the signified, which

It helps to foster should therefore, as de Man has argued in his recent *Allegories of Reading*, constitute criticism's goal: reading, that is, which is prepared to embrace the genuinely subversive nature of allegorical language, with its dizzying capacity for unlimited trope.

But despite de Man's commitment to subversion, Lentricchia finds his position ultimately static and conservative. In his view, it seeks to preserve literature as an autonomous entity, unsituated economically or politically and speaking by means of its exemplarity, self-conscious duplicity, only about the nature of language itself. It *aporia* finally constitutes the quinquessence of the literary experience, that is the only kind of freedom it offers us: the freedom of indeterminacy, bewilderment, the abyss.

Not surprisingly, Lentricchia welcomes Harold Bloom's rejection of many of the implications of this position. Bloom's notion of "misreading" or willful misreading is linked to a theory of influence that at once atop the aridities of mere *qualitative* and satisfactorily critical absurdities of the Age of Eliot. But, says Lentricchia, Bloom remains, as if "in the shadow of his own theory, a captive of the positions he opposes. His attack on modernism, his attempted revision of the status of Romanticism, his theory of influence itself, lead finally to no assertion of the wild human presence in all writing, to the expense of the influence of other factors. Carried to its madman's extreme, Bloom's work ends by shorting up the institution of literary studies as we have always known it.

And this constitutes the essence of Lentricchia's diagnosis of New Criticism's pervasive influence. Whatever their professed intentions, the contrary, some burning of the virus, live on in them. The anti-historical influence (the *influence*)

infects the air they breathe. Only the work of Michel Foucault (and possibly that of Edward Said) seems to offer the best hope of radical change. Foucault's denial of continuity in history can be seen as analogous to Derrida's denial of presence in writing. Where "continuous" history tries to preserve the sovereignty of the subject and a unified "point of view" from which he governs and limits the production of meaning, Lentricchia's argument of this case, is a few concessions to readers who are not prepared to grapple with the difficult and highly theoretical concepts on which his analysis rests. His style can be dense and even as well as witty and deft. Not all will agree with the career he examines are exemplary of anything other than the private aesthetic of a few men, whose taste of history seems open to many of the charges laid against the late Mackintosh.

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